OCTOBER
20th
1925
25c

PUBLISHED
THREE TIMES A MONTH

Adventure

Stafford Good

Hugh Pendexter
Barry Scobee
Leonard H. Nason
H. Bedford-Jones
Captain Dingle
Thomson Burtis
William Byron Mowery
James Parker Long
Charles Victor Fischer

3 Complete Novelettes

CLIP-CAP
IDEAL

With a few strokes of a pen — American patriots registered their Independence

A Waterman's Pen—with one filling—would have written many times the entire Declaration of Independence. It would have startled these patriots into an appreciation of its remarkable efficiency.

In millions of homes and offices today it is freeing men and women from pen-discomfort and aiding them in "the pursuit of happiness."

For the sake of independence try a Waterman's. We recommend the model illustrated. Black, mottled or cardinal holders; fitted with pen points that write as you would write.

Illustration is exact size of $4 model

From $4 to $6.50, according to size

Sold and guaranteed by 50,000 merchants

Waterman's Ideal Fountain Pen

Can You Guess This Man's Age?

See if You Can Tell Within 25 Years; The Author Couldn't; But He Stuck With Hobart Bradstreet Until He Revealed His Method of Staying Young

I USED to pride myself on guessing people's ages. That was before I met Hobart Bradstreet, whose age I missed by a quarter-century. But before I tell you how old he really is, let me say this:

My meeting up with Bradstreet I count the luckiest day of my life. For while we often hear how our minds and bodies are about 50% efficient—and at times feel it to be the truth—he knows *why*. Furthermore, he knows how to overcome it—in five minutes—and he showed me *how*.

This man offers no such bromides as setting-up exercises, deep-breathing, or any of those things you know at the outset you'll never do. He uses a principle that is the foundation of all chiropractic, naprapathy, mechano-therapy, and even osteopathy. Only he does not touch a hand to you; it isn't necessary.

The reader will grant Bradstreet's method of staying young worth knowing and using, when told that its originator (whose photograph reproduced here was taken a month ago) is sixty-five years old!

And here is the secret: *he keeps his spine a half-inch longer than it ordinarily would measure.*

Any man or woman who thinks just one-half inch elongation of the spinal column doesn't make a difference should try it! It is easy enough. I'll tell you how. First, though, you may be curious to learn why a full-length spine puts one in an entirely new class physically. The spinal column is a series of tiny bones, between which are pads or cushions of cartilage. Nothing in the ordinary activities of us humans stretches the spine. So it "settles" day by day, until those once soft and resilient pads become thin as a safety-razor blade—and just about as hard. One's spine (the most wonderfully designed shock-absorber known) is then an unyielding column that transmits every shock straight to the base of the brain.

Do you wonder folks have backaches and headaches? That one's nerves pound toward the end of a hard day? Or that a nervous system may periodically go to pieces? For every nerve in one's body connects with the spine, which is a sort of central switchboard. When the "insulation," or cartilage, wears down and flattens out, the nerves are exposed, or even impinged—and there is trouble on the line.

Now, for proof that sublaxation of the spine causes most of the ills and ailments which spell "age" in men or women. Flex your spine—"shake it out"—and they will disappear. You'll feel the difference in *ten minutes*. At least, I did. It's no trick to secure complete spinal laxation as Bradstreet does it. But like everything else, one must know how. No amount of violent exercise will do it; not even chopping wood. As for walking, or golfing, your spine settles down a bit firmer with each step.

Mr. Bradstreet had evolved from his 25-year experience with spinal mechanics a simple, boiled-down formula of just five movements. Neither takes more than one minute, so it means but five minutes a day. But those movements! I never experienced such compound exhilaration before. I was a good subject for the test, for I went into it with a dull headache. At the end of the second movement I thought I could actually feel my blood circulating. The third movement in this remarkable SPINE-MOTION series brought an amazing feeling of exhilaration. One motion seemed to open and shut my backbone like a jack-knife.

I asked about constipation. He gave me another motion—a peculiar, writhing and twisting movement—and fifteen minutes later came a complete evacuation!

Hobart Bradstreet frankly gives the full credit for his conspicuous success to these simple secrets of SPINE-MOTION. He has traveled about for years, conditioning those whose means permitted a specialist at their beck and call. I met him at the Roycroft Inn, at East Aurora. Incidentally, the late Elbert Hubbard and he were great pals; he was often the "Fra's" guest in times past. But Bradstreet, young as he looks and feels, thinks he has chased around the country long enough. He has been prevailed upon to put his **Spine-Motion** method in form that makes it now generally available.

HOBART BRADSTREET, THE MAN WHO DECLINES TO GROW OLD

I know what these remarkable mechanics of the spine have done for me. I have checked up at least twenty-five cases. With all sincerity I say nothing in the whole realm of medicine or specialism can quicker re-make, rejuvenate and restore one. I wish you could see Bradstreet himself. He is arrogantly healthy; he doesn't seem to have any nerves. Yet he puffs incessantly at a black cigar that would floor some men, drinks two cups of coffee at every meal, and I don't believe he averages seven hours' sleep. It shows what a sound nerve-mechanism will do. He says a man's power can and should be unabated up to the age of 60, in every sense, and I have had some astonishing testimony on that score.

Would you like to try this remarkable method of "coming back"? Or, if young, and apparently normal in your action and feelings, do you want to see your energies just about doubled? It is easy. No "apparatus" is required. Just Bradstreet's few, simple instructions, made doubly clear by his photographic poses of the five positions. Results come amazingly quick. In less than a week you'll have new health, new appetite, new desire, and new capacities; you'll feel years lifted off mind and body. This miracle-man's method can be tested without any advance risk. If you feel enormously benefited, everything is yours to keep and you have paid for it all the enormous sum of $3.00! Knowing something of the fees this man has been accustomed to receiving, I hope his naming $3.00 to the general public will have full appreciation.

The $3.00 which pays for everything is not sent in advance, nor do you make any deposit or payment on delivery. Try how it feels to have a full-length spine, and you'll henceforth pity men and women whose nerves are in a vise!

HOBART BRADSTREET, Suite 551-05,
630 S. Wabash Ave., Chicago, Ill.

I will try your Spine-Motion without risk if you will provide necessary instructions. Send everything postpaid, without any charge or obligation, and I will try it five days. If I find Spine-Motion highly beneficial I can remit just $3 in full payment; otherwise I will return the material and will owe you nothing.

Name..

Address..

ADVENTURE
Oct. 20th, 1925

Published three times a month by The Ridgway Company at Spring and Macdougal Sts., New York, N. Y. Yearly subscription $6.00 in advance; single copy 25 cents. Entered as second-class matter Oct. 1, 1910, at the post-office at New York, N. Y., under the act of March 3, 1879.

Volume 55
Number 2

Does Happiness Cost Too Much?

THERE is no catalog number for "happiness," but we sell it just the same. You'll not find it illustrated, but it appears on every page. The frock for the young lady's first party; the boy's bicycle; dad's radio; mother's new coat. Don't they all mean happiness? And could all of them be had if Sears, Roebuck and Co. wasn't able to sell good merchandise at such low prices?

A customer recently wrote us: "I take great pleasure in showing my furniture to my neighbors. I shall always advertise you by your honesty and great bargains."

Things like that—and every day's mail contains a great many such letters—make us feel that we are a real factor in the lives of millions of American families. You could hardly blame us for feeling a bit proud in helping these folks to a little happiness they might not otherwise have been able to obtain.

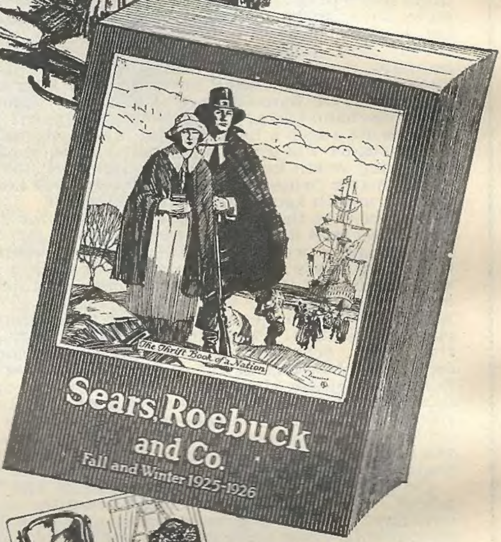
Sears, Roebuck and Co. brings the trading centers of the Old World and the New World as well direct to the doors of our nine million customers; they see in our catalogs, at prices they can afford, the things they need, and the luxuries they have wanted.

One-fourth of all the families in the United States know that we guarantee them a saving on everything they buy; know we sell only quality merchandise, honestly illustrated and described. They know, too, that we ship all orders in less than 24 hours.

Our New Big Catalog for Fall and Winter is ready. It shows 35,000 bargains on everything needed for the family, the home and the farm. Send for it today.

Sears, Roebuck and Co.

CHICAGO · PHILADELPHIA · KANSAS CITY
DALLAS · SEATTLE



Send for Your FREE Copy

If you haven't a copy of our New Big General Catalog, send for it today. This convenient coupon will bring you our great Fall and Winter book, with its 35,000 bargains.

Mail the coupon TODAY to store nearest you

Sears, Roebuck and Co. 73A84

Chicago · Philadelphia · Kansas City · Dallas · Seattle

Send Latest General Catalog.

Name..........

Postoffice..........

Rural Route.......... Box No..........

State..........

Street and No..........

WORLD'S LARGEST STORE

We own and operate Radio Station W L S. Tune in on 344.6 meters.

Adventure

Registered in
U. S. Patent Office

October 20 1925 Vol LV No 2

Published Three Times a Month by THE RIDGWAY COMPANY

J. H. GANNON, President — C. H. HOLMES, Secretary and Treasurer

Spring and Macdougal Streets - - New York, N. Y.
6, Henrietta St., Covent Garden, London, W. C., England

Entered as Second-Class Matter, October 1, 1910, at the Post-Office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879

ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN, Editor

Yearly Subscription, $6.00 in advance — Single Copy, Twenty-Five Cents

Foreign postage, $3.00 additional. Canadian Postage, 90 cents.

Trade-Mark Registered; Copyright, 1925, by The Ridgway Company in the United States and Great Britain. Entered at Stationers' Hall, London, England.

The editor assumes no risk for manuscripts and illustrations submitted to this magazine, but he will use all due care while they are in his hands.

Contents for October 20th, 1925, Issue

The Oily Bird *A Complete Novelette* . . . . . **Thomson Burtis** 1
Texas—aviators in the oil-fields.

Home from the Wars . . . . **James Parker Long** 41
Canada—over the hills the bagpipes called him.

The Knell of the Horn . . . . **Captain Dingle** 50
Sea—Cape Stiff takes its toll of lives.

The Border Breed *A Five-Part Story Part I* . . . . . **Hugh Pendexter** 55
Tennessee, 1800—*Joel*, the trail-breaker, knew *Dancer* was a dangerous man.

Slants on Life *Just Folks* . . . . **Bill Adams** 80

The Slat Wagon . . . . **Leonard H. Nason** 81
War—trouble, temper and trickery.

Thirteen Men and a Cock-Eyed Mate *A Complete Novelette* . **Charles Victor Fischer** 89
Guam—*Ponzo*, the tyrant, was not too clever.

The Revenge of Don Emilio . . . . **Thomas Topham** 106
Mexico—"I weel have justice!"

**Occasionally one of our stories will be called an "Off-the-Trail" story, a warning that it is in some way different from the usual magazine stories, perhaps a little different, perhaps a good deal. It may violate a canon of literature or a custom of magazines, or merely be different from the type usually found in this magazine. The difference may lie in unusual theme, material, ending, or manner of telling. No question of relative merit is involved.*

(Continued on next page)

(Continued from preceding page)

How General Montgomery Was Buried . . . . . Faunce Rochester 115

Rodomont *Conclusion* . . . . H. Bedford-Jones 116
France, 1707—the escape was fraught with peril.

No Law . . . . Barry Scobee 149
Mexican Border—the private wanted too much liberty.

Pioneer Ingenuity *Early Days* . . . . Arthur Woodward 161

St. Gabriel Zsbyski . . . . William Byron Mowery 162
Northwest—the Mounted didn't believe in prophets.

The Camp-Fire A free-to-all meeting-place for readers, writers and adventurers 178

Camp-Fire Stations 185

Lost Trails 187

Various Practical Services Free to Any Reader 187

Ask Adventure 188
A free question and answer service bureau of information on outdoor life and activities everywhere. Comprising seventy-four geographical sub-divisions, with special sections on Radio, Mining and Prospecting, Weapons, Fishing, Forestry, Aviation, Army Matters, North American Anthropology, Health on the Trail, Herpetology, Railroading and Entomology.

Old Songs That Men Have Sung 191

The Trail Ahead 192

Headings . . . . R. Tandler

Cover Design . . . . Stafford Good

ROBERT SIMPSON

Three Complete Novelettes

NOBODY knew who *Cooper,* the quiet, dark, superstitious young man aboard ship, was, except that he was bound for the back rivers of Africa and that he was prone to make a fool of himself. But on a small mud flat beside a jungle river things were different. "LIQUOR AND LUCK" is a complete novelette, by Robert Simpson, in the next issue.

JOHN ROGERS was his name when he studied in the United States, but in Mexico he bore a name that necessitated his traveling at night. Then he worked a veritable miracle, and he was given still another name. "CONQUISTADOR," a complete novelette by John Murray Reynolds, will appear in the next issue.

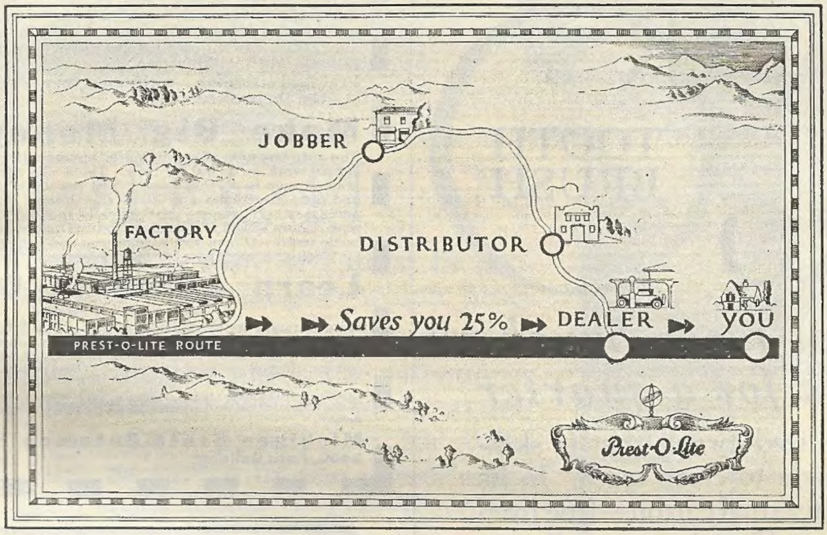
HASHKNIFE HARTLEY found an anonymous letter waiting for him when he arrived in the little cow-town of Calume. It had a tone of trouble, but *Hashknife* little realized what it would bring about. "THE TIN GOD OF TWISTED RIVER," a complete novel by W. C. Tuttle, will appear in the next issue.

Other stories in the next issue are forecast on the last page of this one

Adventure is out on the 10th, 20th and 30th of each month

Prest-O-Lite

takes the short cut—*saving you 25% on battery costs*



In actual money—this means that for only $15.50 you can get the same Prest-O-Lite Storage Battery for your car that cost $20.50 a short time ago. Remember, it's the same twenty-dollar battery—only the price has been changed. Not the quality or the service.

A Prest-O-Lite costs you less today because it costs us less to get a Prest-O-Lite to you.

We send Prest-O-Lite Batteries to you by a short cut. Right from our factory to your dealer or service station. We have eliminated the two profits that result when batteries are sent over the expensive, round-about road through jobbers and distributors.

The saving is *yours*—and it's a saving that you can't afford to pass up.

No matter what size Prest-O-Lite you need, the saving will be the same—about 25 per cent.

When you need a new battery for your car, see the Prest-O-Lite man near you. You'll save money, you will secure honest, satisfactory service and you'll have in your car an efficient, rugged, well-made, long-lived battery that has a real name back of it. A battery perfected in the world's largest electro-chemical laboratories.

For more than 20 years the name "Prest-O-Lite" has stood for the highest quality, for constant progress and for better all-round service to the motorist.

You'll find Prest-O-Lite Service—"The Oldest Service to Motorists"—better than ever. Take advantage of its friendly help any time, no matter what make battery you are using. You're never very far from a Prest-O-Lite Service Station.

THE PREST-O-LITE CO., Inc.
INDIANAPOLIS, IND.
New York San Francisco
In Canada: Prest-O-Lite Co. of Canada, Ltd.
Toronto, Ontario

For Radio—*Prest-O-Lite Radio Batteries—both "A" and "B"—are especially designed for radio, and combine many improvements that insure long life and satisfactory service. Buy them and save money.*

Write for Free Road Map

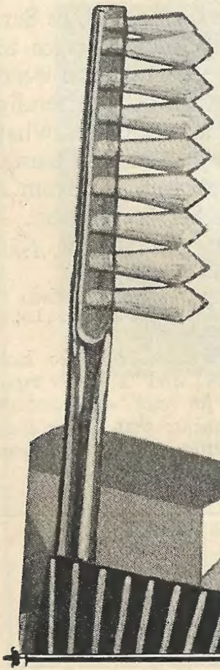
We have prepared up-to-date road maps of every state in the United States. These maps show all towns and principal highways and which of the roads are hard surfaced. Ideal for tourists. We'll gladly send you the maps of any states you specify—free upon request. Address Prest-O-Lite Company, Department B, Indianapolis, Ind.

Two brushings a day—
Teeth free from decay.

ORO TOOTH BRUSH

the best tooth brush on earth for a quarter

A sterilized brush that is skillfully made to clean teeth. In its own individual carton—free from handling. ORO is outstanding in quality. The one standard nationally advertised 25c brush that you can buy at any good dealer's. An official "warranted perfect" stamped on handle of each ORO. A substantial saving; ask for ORO at your dealer's.



PRICE 25¢

In sanitary carton

© 1925, The Western Co.
Chicago, New York

ORO

$86^{75} A Week or More

It is a poor week when Earl Hatfield doesn't make *more* than that in his garage. At 19 years of age, a farmer boy, he came to Detroit, the Auto Center, and learned the auto business at this great School. Now he has a fine business near his home, is married, independent, making good money. He is just one of many who have done the same. These successful Michigan State trained men are just plain fellows, no brighter nor better educated than you. Practical training at the factory endorsed school started them to success.

Make Big Money Too

The auto business offers unlimited opportunities. Think of the repair work on 18,000,000 cars. There are not nearly enough trained men to do this work. You can be a skilled mechanic and auto electrician and *Earn Big Money*. Experience isn't necessary. If you are mechanically inclined come to Detroit now, to my school. Become a trained man and go back to your home town. If you run a farm you can increase your profits. Or work as a mechanic, or start a garage of your own.

Learn Autos In Detroit

The Heart of the Industry

Here you have wonderful advantages. Study autos, trucks, engines, auto electricity, tractors. All on best equipment, up-to-date, many new cars; expert instructors; a thorough course that slights nothing. Inspect the great auto plants. These great companies approve this school. Get factory endorsed training at Detroit, the Auto Center.

GOOD POSITIONS OPEN. Here's your chance to be independent. Write today for full information about Detroit training to make the most money.
A. G. Zeller, President

Michigan State Automobile School
2450 Auto Building **Detroit, Mich.**

Genuine Diamond Ring

Biggest Diamond Bargain Ever Offered
Sent to You for Only
$1.00 Down
Complete Price Only
$37.50

"Norma" Diamond Ring
Genuine blue white Diamond, 18-K white gold ring, $37.50. $1.00 down and $1.00 a Week

FREE Big Diamond Book sent *absolutely free.* Write today!

No. 49 — Wrist Watch. 18-K White Gold; 17 Jewels. Price only $37.50. $1.00 down and $1.00 a Week

LOFTIS BROS.&CO. EST'D. 1858
Dept. E 224 Stores in Leading Cities
108 NORTH STATE STREET, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

RADIO FANS—Listen in on WHT every Monday night from 7 to 7.30, every Friday night from 9.30 to 10, central standard time.
Loftis Bros. & Co.'s hour of music

Mailing Lists

Will help you increase sales
Send for FREE catalog giving counts and prices on thousands of classified names of your best prospective customers--National, State and Local--Individuals, Professions, Business Concerns.

99% Guaranteed by refund of 5¢ each

ROSS-Gould Co. 591 N. 10th St. **St. Louis**

PROTECTION

"SOMEBODY'S Mother" must be protected from the dangers which beset all of us.

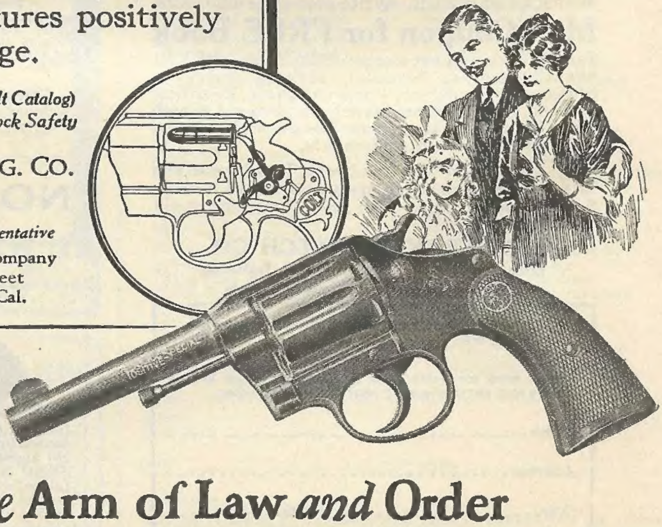
Your child's mother needs the safeguards you can place about her. She and you and yours need Colt protection for your home. Just as surely as the officer's uplifted hand stops traffic, a Colt Revolver or Automatic Pistol says, "Stop!" to anyone who would unlawfully intrude upon the privacy of your home.

Colt dependability is well known to all men—best known and feared by those you need to fear. Yet, all Colts are harmless until the trigger is intentionally pulled because Colt safety features positively prevent accidental discharge.

Any Colt Dealer (or the new Colt Catalog) will explain this Colt Positive Lock Safety

COLT'S PATENT FIRE ARMS MFG. CO.
HARTFORD, CONN.

Pacific Coast Representative
Phil. B. Bekeart Company
717 Market Street
San Francisco, Cal.



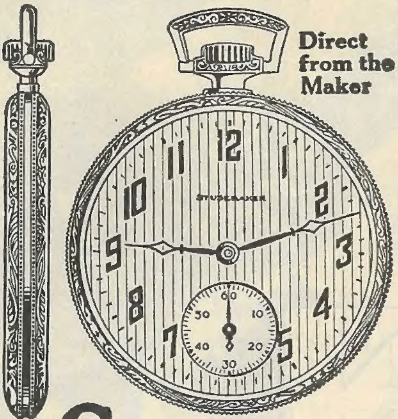
COLT'S

The Arm of Law *and* Order

21 Jewel ~ Extra thin
STUDEBAKER
The *Insured* Watch

Direct from the Maker

New Model Extra Thin



SENT FOR $1.00 DOWN!

Only $1.00! The balance in easy monthly payments. You get the famous Studebaker 21 Jewel Watch—Insured for a lifetime; a choice of 60 new Art Beauty Cases; 8 adjustments, including heat, cold, isochronism and 5 positions—*direct from the maker* at lowest prices ever named on equal quality. Write today for FREE BOOK of Advance Watch Styles.

Watch Chain FREE!

For a limited time we are offering a beautiful Watch Chain FREE. Write now while offer lasts.

Mail Coupon for FREE Book

Send at once and get a copy of this book—FREE! See the newest, beautiful, advance styles in Studebaker Art Beauty Cases and Dials. Read how you can buy a 21 Jewel Studebaker Insured Watch direct from the maker—save big money—and pay for it on easy monthly payments.

Write! for our free book. It will post you on watch styles and watch values. Send coupon at once. Get Free Chain offer today while it lasts.

STUDEBAKER WATCH CO.
Dept. W21 South Bend, Indiana
Canadian Address: Windsor, Ontario

STUDEBAKER WATCH CO.
Dept. W21 South Bend, Indiana

Please send me your Free Book of Advance Watch Styles and particulars of your $1.00 down offer.

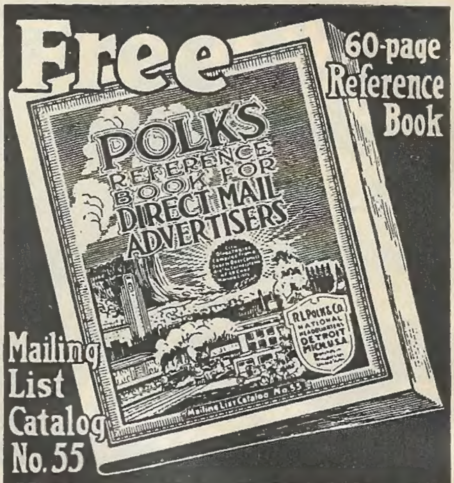
Name.....................................

Address.....................................

City...................*State*...........

Free 60-page Reference Book

Mailing List Catalog No. 55


POLK'S REFERENCE BOOK FOR DIRECT MAIL ADVERTISERS
R.L. POLK & CO. NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS DETROIT MICH. U.S.A.
Mailing List Catalog No. 55

Get Business by Mail

60 pages of vital business facts and figures. Who, where and how many your prospects are. 8,000 lines of business covered. Compiled by the Largest Directory Publishers in the world, thru information obtained by actual door-to-door canvass.

Write for your FREE copy.

R. L. POLK & CO., Detroit, Mich.
671 POLK DIRECTORY BLDG.
Branches in principal cities of U. S.

Play the HAWAIIAN GUITAR Just as the Natives Do

FREE when you enroll **$15 HAWAIIAN GUITAR and Case**

Only 4 Motions used in playing this fascinating instrument. Our native Hawaiian instructors teach you to master them quickly. Pictures show how. Everything explained clearly.

Play in Half Hour
After you get the four easy motions you play harmonious chords with very little practice. No previous musical knowledge necessary.

Easy Lessons
Even if you don't know one note from another, the 52 printed lessons and the clear pictures make it easy to learn quickly. Pay as you play.

Free Guitar
and Outfit in Genuine Seal Grain Fabrikoid Case as soon as you enroll. Nothing to buy—everything furnished. No delay.

Write at Once
You'll never be lonesome with this beautiful Hawaiian Guitar. Write for Special Offer and easy terms. A postcard will do. ACT!

FIRST HAWAIIAN CONSERVATORY of MUSIC, Inc.
9th Floor, Woolworth Bldg., Dept. 34, New York, N. Y.
Approved as a Correspondence School Under the Laws of the State of New York

NO JOKE TO BE BALD

Grow New Hair Quick

Let Me PROVE It To You FREE

What I accomplished on my own head, pictured above, I believe I can do for you, provided you are under 45 years of age and loss of hair was not caused by burns or scars. Anyhow, *I must succeed or you pay nothing.* No apparatus—my home treatment is simple, quick and inexpensive. SEND NO MONEY, just your name and address and I will mail you full information with PHOTOGRAPHS, NAMES and ADDRESSES of men and women who have successfully used my treatment for dandruff, falling hair and particularly for baldness. *Write Now.* A postal will do.

VREELANDS, 1907 E. 40th St., Cleveland, O.

For Sports

NOCKABOUT
TRADE MARK

Knit Jackets

Acknowledged by those who know to be one of the highest quality knit jackets obtainable at $7.50 retail. Other styles up to $10.00.

Tailored to fit; holds its shape; every detail finished for superior service.

See the quality creations in Nockabout plain rib knit and "Gee-an-esS" plush fabrics at your dealer's.

Nockabout vests to match jackets.

At your dealer's or write for booklet

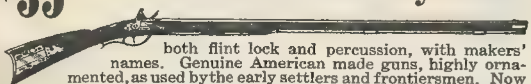
Grushlaw & Sichel
345 Broadway, Dept. A, New York

$100.00 a week for YOU!

We pay you *BIG* to take orders for Val-Style Made-To-Measure Millinery. Absolutely No Competition! Every hat covered by our Absolute Guarantee of Satisfaction. Write TODAY for special offer and Exclusive Territory.

Val-Style Hat Co. A-103 **Val-Style Bldg.**
CINCINNATI, OHIO

$35 Famous Kentucky Guns



both flint lock and percussion, with makers' names. Genuine American made guns, highly ornamented, as used by the early settlers and frontiersmen. Now scarce. Prices from $35 up. Powder horns from $4.50 up. 60th Anniversary Catalog, *illustrated*, 372 pages, of army and navy goods, with all American muskets and pistols since 1775. Mailed for 50 cents. Special 20-page circular for 2c stamp. Established 1865.

FRANCIS BANNERMAN SONS **501 Broadway, New York City**

Are you afraid you will be fired?

ARE you sitting on the anxious bench wondering what will happen to you if business slacks up? Are you one of the many small-salaried, untrained workers who are always the first to go when employers start cutting the salary list?

Why have this spectre of unemployment hanging over you all the time? Why not decide today that you are going to make yourself so valuable to your employer that he can't get along without you?

You can do it if you really want to, right at home in spare time, through the International Correspondence Schools. In just an hour a day you can get the special training that you must have if you are ever going to get—*and keep*—a real job at a real salary.

You're ambitious, aren't you? And you want to get ahead? Then don't turn this page until you have clipped the coupon, marked the line of work you want to follow and mailed it to Scranton for full particulars.

Surely it is worth at least a two-cent stamp to find out all about the I. C. S. and what it can do for you.

The I. C. S. is the oldest and largest correspondence school in the world

Mail the Coupon for Free Booklet

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS
Box 2020-E, Scranton, Penna.

Without cost or obligation, please tell me how I can qualify for the position or in the subject *before* which I have marked an X:

BUSINESS TRAINING COURSES

☐ Business Management
☐ Industrial Management
☐ Personnel Organization
☐ Traffic Management
☐ Business Law
☐ Banking and Banking Law
☐ Accountancy (including C.P.A.)
☐ Nicholson Cost Accounting
☐ Bookkeeping
☐ Private Secretary
☐ Spanish ☐ French
☐ Salesmanship
☐ Advertising
☐ Better Letters
☐ Show Card Lettering
☐ Stenography and Typing
☐ Business English
☐ Civil Service
☐ Railway Mail Clerk
☐ Common School Subjects
☐ High School Subjects
☐ Illustrating ☐ Cartooning

TECHNICAL AND INDUSTRIAL COURSES

☐ Electrical Engineering
☐ Electric Lighting
☐ Mechanical Engineer
☐ Mechanical Draftsman
☐ Machine Shop Practice
☐ Railroad Positions
☐ Gas Engine Operating
☐ Civil Engineer
☐ Surveying and Mapping
☐ Metallurgy
☐ Steam Engineering
☐ Radio
☐ Architect
☐ Architects' Blue Prints
☐ Contractor and Builder
☐ Architectural Draftsman
☐ Concrete Builder
☐ Structural Engineer
☐ Chemistry ☐ Pharmacy
☐ Automobile Work
☐ Airplane Engines
☐ Navigation
☐ Agriculture and Poultry
☐ Mathematics

Name..
Street Address.. 3-6-24
City..............................State...............................
Occupation..

Persons residing in Canada should send this coupon to the International Correspondence Schools Canadian, Limited, Montreal, Canada.

BURGESS
RADIO BATTERIES
Win Again

The illustration pictures the take-off of the winning flight and the insert is the radio equipment carried. (Burgess 'A,' 'B' and 'C' Batteries furnished the electrical energy to operate the set.)

When the Goodyear III won the right to represent the United States at Belgium, Burgess Radio Batteries supplied the electrical energy for the operation of the balloon's radio equipment.

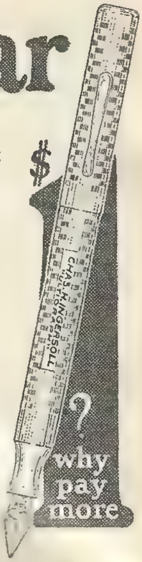
Almost every day from some where in the world news comes to us of new Burgess adventures.

And that Burgess Batteries have contributed their bit in so many interesting events of sport, commerce and science reflects the esteem in which they are held.

"Ask Any Radio Engineer"

Your own radio dealer down the street sells Burgess Batteries. He probably sells the famous Burgess Flashlights, too.

BURGESS BATTERY COMPANY
GENERAL SALES OFFICE: CHICAGO
Canadian Factories and Offices:
Niagara Falls and Winnipeg



One Dollar
for a fountain pen that
Wont Leak!
Wont Break!!
Wont Wear Out!!!

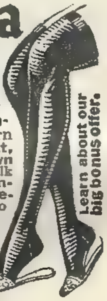
Designed, Manufactured and GUARANTEED by
Chas. H. Ingersoll of DOLLAR WATCH FAME

Ask Your Dealer—if he cannot supply you we will fill your order, charges prepaid, upon receipt of ONE DOLLAR. Specify Model—Men's, Women's, Juniors'.

DEALERS—Order a dozen at trade prices, guaranteed to meet your approval, or write for details of liberal proposition.

CHAS. H. INGERSOLL DOLLAR PEN CO.
110 Astor St., Newark, New Jersey

Chas. H. Ingersoll
EVERLASTING
Dollar Pen


Learn about our big bonus offer.

Make $100.00 a week

You, too, can make the big money which **men and women** in the selling game earn today. Build up a permanent, profitable business of your own selling our nationally known silk hosiery direct to wearer. No investment—profits begin immediately. Our free instructions make it so easy and pleasant that you cannot fail. **No experience necessary. Work full or spare time.**

FREE Men and women—write today for our new plan which shows you how to make $60 to $125 a week and be your own boss.

Write today to SOLIDSILK HOSIERY CO.,
Department A-35, 315 Fourth Ave., New York

PURE WOOL
$23.50
UNION MADE
Suits and Overcoats

District Salesmen Wanted

Experienced men can easily earn **$100.00** a week at start. Our union made suits and overcoats at **$23.50** (none higher) are America's biggest values. We show latest nifty colors and styles for men and young men. Only **pure wool** fabrics. The overcoats are satin lined. Protected territory. Can use spare time men in some towns. Write today for application blank and free sample of the world s greatest clothing values.

Address **D. S. HARVEY, Box 00, CHICAGO**

$1 DOWN

21 Jewels

Nothing less than 21 Ruby and Sapphire jewels is good enough for the Burlington masterpiece.

Quality and Style

Adjusted to the second—temperature—isochronism—positions. 25 year Gold Strata Case, in 100 exquisite designs. Only $1 down. Balance in small monthly payments. **Send for free book.**

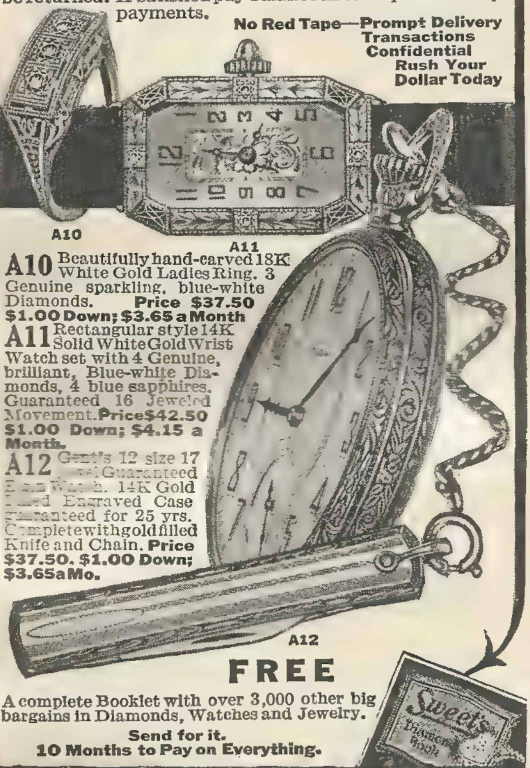
Burlington Watch Company
19th Street and Marshall Boulevard
Dept. 14-67 Chicago, Illinois

$1 Brings your Choice of these 3 Big Specials

Buy From Us and Save Money

Simply pin a dollar bill to this ad, put it in an envelope with your name and address and *Mail It Today.* Your choice of these exceptional values will come Prepaid for a *15 Day Trial.* If you can duplicate your purchase for less money anywhere, send it back and your dollar will be returned. If satisfied pay balance in ten equal monthly payments.

No Red Tape—Prompt Delivery Transactions Confidential Rush Your Dollar Today



A10 Beautifully hand-carved 18K White Gold Ladies Ring. 3 Genuine sparkling, blue-white Diamonds. **Price $37.50 $1.00 Down; $3.65 a Month**

A11 Rectangular style 14K Solid White Gold Wrist Watch set with 4 Genuine, brilliant, Blue-white Diamonds, 4 blue sapphires. Guaranteed 16 Jeweled Movement. **Price $42.50 $1.00 Down; $4.15 a Month.**

A12 Gent's 12 size 17 Jewel Guaranteed [illegible] Watch. 14K Gold Filled Engraved Case guaranteed for 25 yrs. Complete with gold filled Knife and Chain. **Price $37.50. $1.00 Down; $3.65 a Mo.**

FREE

A complete Booklet with over 3,000 other big bargains in Diamonds, Watches and Jewelry.

Send for it.
10 Months to Pay on Everything.

AUTHORIZED CAPITAL $1,000,000.

L·W·SWEET INC.
985-R. 1660 BROADWAY, NEW YORK

Stop Using a Truss

Reduced Fac-Simile Gold Medal

Reduced Fac-Simile Grand Prix

STUART'S PLAPAO-PADS are different from the truss, being mechanico-chemico applicators made **self-adhesive** purposely to hold the distended muscles securely in place. **no straps, buckles or spring attached**—cannot slip, so **cannot** chafe or press against the pubic bone. Thousands have successfully treated themselves at home without hindrance from work—most obstinate cases conquered. **Soft as velvet—easy to apply—inexpensive.** Awarded Gold Medal and Grand Prix. Process of recovery is natural, so afterwards no further use for trusses. We prove it by sending Trial of Plapao absolutely **FREE** Write name on Coupon and send **TODAY.**

Plapao Co., 633 Stuart Bldg., St. Louis, Mo.

Name..

Address..

Return mail will bring Free Trial Plapao.

Chosen Out of 100 Applicants

The Way to Bigger Income

"To LaSalle goes the credit for training me so that I was able to turn a refusal into an acceptance in preference to over one hundred other applicants," writes E. W. DeMotte, a New York man. "I cannot give too much credit to LaSalle and its Placement Department for the success of my application for this very fine position." LaSalle trained him. LaSalle got him the job.

"My investment in LaSalle training," writes J. B. Lewels, "has already paid me, during two months alone, an actual cash profit of 300 per cent."

Send for Salary-Doubling Plan

Such records as those just cited are within the reach of any man who will set his goal toward real success. During only six months' time as many as 1,248 LaSalle members reported definite salary-increases totalling $1,399,507, ***an average increase per man of 89 per cent.***

If you are in earnest when you say that you want to get ahead, you will not be satisfied until you have put this kind of training to the test—exchanged it, just as thousands have done, for a bigger income.

The details of the LaSalle Problem Method—often spoken of as the *salary-doubling plan*—will be sent you for the asking. Whether you adopt the plan or not, the basic information it will place in your hands, without cost, is of very real and definite value. And it's FREE.

Balance the two minutes that it takes to fill out the coupon against the rewards of a successful career—then clip and mail the coupon NOW.

LASALLE EXTENSION UNIVERSITY
The World's Largest Business Training Institution
Dept. 1076-R Chicago

Ten Years' Promotion In One

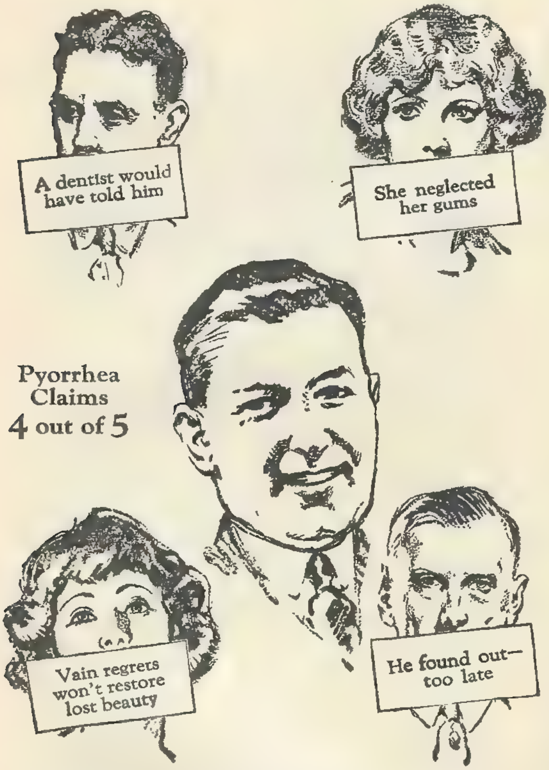
Tell me about your *salary-doubling plan* as applied to my advancement in the business field checked below. Send also copy of "Ten Years' Promotion in One," all without obligation.

- ☐ **Business Management**
- ☐ **Modern Salesmanship**
- ☐ **Higher Accountancy**
- ☐ **Traffic Management**
- ☐ **Railway Station Management**
- ☐ **Law—Degree of LL.B.**
- ☐ **Commercial Law**
- ☐ **Industrial Management**
- ☐ **Modern Foremanship and Production Methods**
- ☐ **Personnel and Employment Management**
- ☐ **Banking and Finance**
- ☐ **Modern Business Correspondence and Practice**
- ☐ **Expert Bookkeeping**
- ☐ **C. P. A. Coaching**
- ☐ **Business English**
- ☐ **Commercial Spanish**
- ☐ **Effective Speaking**

Name ....

Present Position..

Address..


A dentist would have told him
She neglected her gums
Vain regrets won't restore lost beauty
He found out—too late

Pyorrhea
Claims
4 out of 5

Prevent tooth decay below the gum-line

As the soil nourishes the tree roots, the gums nourish the teeth. And as the tree decays if you bare the roots, so do the teeth decay when gum shrinkage starts in.

This condition—one of the first stages of Pyorrhea—is very common and something that ordinary tooth pastes are powerless to prevent. If not checked promptly, it will lead to loss of teeth and serious organic diseases.

If used in time and used consistently twice daily, Forhan's will prevent Pyorrhea or check its progress. It will preserve the gums, safeguard your health and *keep* your mouth clean and wholesome. All druggists, 35c and 60c.

Formula of R. J. Forhan, D. D. S.
Forhan Company, New York

Forhan's
TRADE MARK
FOR THE GUMS
"BRUSH YOUR TEETH WITH IT"
FORMULA OF
R. J. Forhan D.D.S.
NEW YORK
Specialist in DISEASES OF THE MOUTH
PREPARED FOR THE PRESCRIPTION OF THE
DENTAL PROFESSION

Just as the stability of a lighthouse depends upon a firm foundation, so are healthy teeth dependent upon healthy gums

Forhan's

FOR THE GUMS

More than a tooth paste—it checks Pyorrhea

$4.00

Profit for Only 3 Subscriptions

Think how quickly and easily you could secure three subscriptions to this wonderful magazine—*Adventure.* Just so quickly you would earn a profit of $4.00. You can do it not only once—but over and over again.

Hundreds of men and women, old and young—in little towns and big cities—are earning $10, $15 and more every week, by merely giving their SPARE TIME to the pleasant occupation of securing Ridgway subscriptions. You can do the same. Couldn't you use this extra money for new clothes—things for your home, yourself and yours?

NO EXPERIENCE—ONLY SPARE TIME

We pay you from the very start—liberal commissions and generous salaries; and we have three other big popular money-making magazines for you also.

Sample copies and complete supplies sent you FREE. Write today for full details so that you can start earning money at once.

Join Our Busy Money-Makers—Clip This Coupon NOW!

Box 5025, ADVENTURE
Spring and Macdougal Streets, New York City

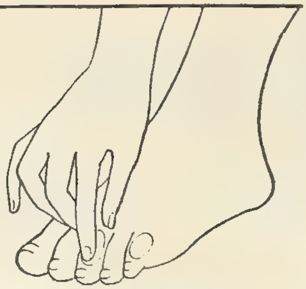
Please send me, without obligation, full particulars of your easy money-making plan.

Name . . . .

Street . . . .

City . . . . *State* . . . .

Quick
Safe
Lasting
Relief



Corns

In one minute—that's how quick you get complete and lasting relief with Dr. Scholl's Zinopads. They work like magic. The soft, thin *protective* pad prevents the shoe from rubbing or pressing the sore spot, while the medication it contains soothes and heals the corn. Absolutely safe and sure and antiseptic. They cost but a trifle. Get a box of Dr. Scholl's Zino-pads today at your druggist's or shoe dealer's. For free sample, address The Scholl Mfg. Co., 213 West Schiller Street, Chicago.

Three Sizes—for corns, callouses, bunions and tender spots

Dr Scholl's Zino-pads

"Put one on—the pain is gone"

Learn Electricity

by practical, personal training in the great shops of **COYNE**

You don't need education or experience. COYNE-trained men earn **$60 to $200 a Week**

COMPLETE ELECTRICAL TRAINING in Twelve Happy Weeks

Free Railroad Fare Get my special offer of free fare to Chicago, also FREE courses in Radio and Auto Truck and Tractor Electricity. Ask for Big, Handsome FREE BOOK containing 151 actual photos of electrical methods and operations in Big Shops.

COYNE ELECTRICAL SCHOOL
Dept. 1417, 1300 West Harrison Street, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

BECOME AN EXPERT
ACCOUNTANT

Executive Accountants and C. P. A's. earn $3,000 to $10,000 a year. Thousands of firms need them. Only 5,000 Certified Public Accountants in the United States. We train you thoroly at home in spare time for C.P.A. examinations or executive accounting positions. Previous experience unnecessary. Training under the personal supervision of William B. Castenholz, A. M., C. P. A., and a large staff of C. P. A's., including members of the American Institute of Accountants. Write for free book, "Accountancy, the Profession that Pays."

LaSalle Extension University, Dept. 1076-H Chicago
The World's Largest Business Training Institution

CLASS RINGS & PINS
Largest Catalog Issued—FREE

Samples loaned class officers. Prices $.20 to $8.00 each. No order for class, society, club emblems too large or too small. Special designs made on request.

METAL ARTS CO., Inc., 7724 South Ave., Rochester, N. Y.

Are You Headed For The Human Junk Heap?

YOU know how the aviator looks over his machine before taking off. You have seen the automobile racers tuning-up before the get away. At every railroad station you have observed the engineer and fireman oiling up the locomotive and examining the bearings. In the power house and in the shops constant inspection and supervision is given dynamos and everything that runs and wears or is likely to get out of order.

STRONGFORT
The Perfect Man

Now how about the human machine—how about YOU? What attention have you paid to your body? Have you seen to it that every part, every organ, every muscle was kept fit and strong, ready to function, either in performance or in warding off illness and the inroads of disease? Or have you, through ignorance or laziness or sheer neglect, permitted it to become rusty, faulty, weak, rheumatic, catarrhal, tubercular, debilitated, despised—a wreck ready for the junk heap—a reject such as no one respects nor admires?

Thousands Are Guilty

of this crime against creation—this offense to humanity. They know deep down in their hearts that they have knowingly, wilfully contributed to the wrecking of their bodies—and you may be numbered among them, perhaps a pitiful apology for a man.

Let's Get Together

But don't stand by and see your body go on down to destruction and perdition. Stop right where you are and get your bearings. Let's get together—you and I—and see what we can save—see if we can't put you on your feet again and make a 100 per cent. man out of you. I've done it with almost countless numbers—I can do it with you. Let's look facts right in the face. You tell me your story—then I'll tell you how I can and will help you.

First Get My Free Book

It's a startling revelation of undisputable facts about the human body that will open your eyes to new visions of life and happiness and success. It will show you how to eliminate from your system, in a very short time, the distressing disorders which have made you feel yourself a misfit to the scheme of humanity; how to build up your body, strengthen ALL your vital organs, turn your anaemic blood into a radiant red and feel the thrill of New Life coursing through your veins. It will teach you how to become FIT physically and mentally; fit for business, for society, for the home, a power among men, a pleasing personality to women. My pupils and graduates in all parts of the world will back up every word I say—you'll find photos and letters from some of them in the book. What I have done for them I can do for YOU. I GUARANTEE IT.

Promotion & Conservation of Health, Strength & Mental-Energy
By Lionel Strongfort

Send for the Book Now. It's Free. Fill out the coupon and enclose a 10c piece (one dime) to help pay postage. Don't delay. SEND IT TODAY.

LIONEL STRONGFORT
Physical and Health Specialists for Over 25 Years
Dept. 36 Newark, New Jersey, U. S. A.

FREE CONSULTATION

Mr. Lionel Strongfort, Dept. 36, Newark, N. J.

Please send me absolutely free enlightenment on the Promotion and Conservation of Health, Strength and Mental Energy. I enclose a ten cent piece (1 dime) to help cover postage and have marked (X) before the subjects in which I am most interested.

....Colds
....Catarrh
....Asthma
....Hay Fever
....Headache
....Thinness
....Rupture
....Lumbago
....Flat Chest
....Increased Height
....Pimples
....Insomnia
....Short Wind
....Constipation
....Indigestion
....Nervousness
....Rheumatism
....Weak Heart
....Poor Circulation
....Round Shoulders
....Lung Troubles
....Muscular Development
....Great Strength
....Tobacco or other bad habits (specify)

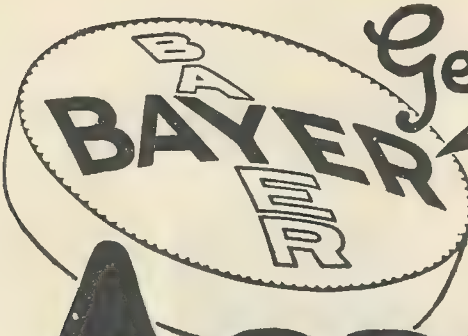
Mention other ailments here..

Name ....

Age ....Occupation ....

Street ....

City ....State ....



Genuine

ASPIRIN

SAY "BAYER ASPIRIN" and INSIST!

Proved safe by millions and prescribed by physicians for

Headache Neuralgia Colds Lumbago
Pain Toothache Neuritis Rheumatism

Safe → Accept only "Bayer" package which contains proven directions.
Handy "Bayer" boxes of 12 tablets
Also bottles of 24 and 100—Druggists.

Aspirin is the trade mark of Bayer Manufacture of Monoaceticacidester of Salicylicacid

Let Us Put $50 In Your Bank

WHAT would you say if some one offered to place $50 to your credit every month? You'd be mighty pleased, of course, especially when there is no obligation on your part, with the exception of giving a few spare hours of your time.

We have devised a plan that will turn every one of your spare moments into good hard cash—and plenty of it. A plan that is remarkable in its simplicity, rich in its returns, and is a proven success. We have shown hundreds of men, young and old, how they might increase their income. The same opportunity is open to you. Just send the coupon below and we will send you at once full particulars. There's absolutely no obligation.

Box 5026, ADVENTURE,
Spring and Macdougal Sts., New York City, N.Y.
Please send me full particulars regarding your special money-making plan.

Name...................................
Street...................................
City.................... *State*............

FOR DANDRUFF

GLOVER'S exercises an antiseptic effect on the scalp. Cleanses, stimulates. Send for GLOVER'S HANDBOOK on the Scalp and Hair; *free* on request. It will tell you many things you should know. Write Dept. N-2.

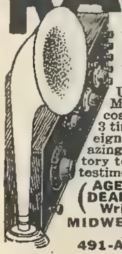
H. Clay Glover Co.,
Inc., 119 - 121
Fifth Avenue.
New York.

GLOVER'S
IMPERIAL
MANGE MEDICINE

At Druggists, Barbers or Hairdressers

FAMOUS "COAST TO COAST" MIRACO GUARANTEED

RADIO'S-*Factory Prices*
SAVE 1/3 TO 1/2



Powerful, New Multi-tube Miraco gets long distance on loud speaker. Set, ONLY $27.35 Retail

SEND for SPECIAL OFFER!

Users everywhere report Miraco radios get programs coast to coast; outperform sets 3 times as costly. Many hear foreign countries. Radio's most amazing values in guaranteed, factory tested, long distance sets—let testimony of users convince you.

(AGENTS DEALERS Write!) FREE! Literature on latest 1 to 5 tube models and new low prices.

MIRACO RADIO GETS 'EM COAST to COAST

MIDWEST RADIO CORPORATION
Pioneer Builders of Sets
491-A E. 8th St., Cincinnati, Ohio

No layman should ever pare a corn

A corn razor in the hands of a layman is a dangerous instrument. A slip of the blade often means infection. And infection many times leads to serious results.

Corn-paring should be done by a skilled chiropodist—never by an amateur.

The best way to end a corn at home is to use Blue=jay.

* * *

Blue=jay is, indeed, the sure, safe and easy way to end a corn at home.

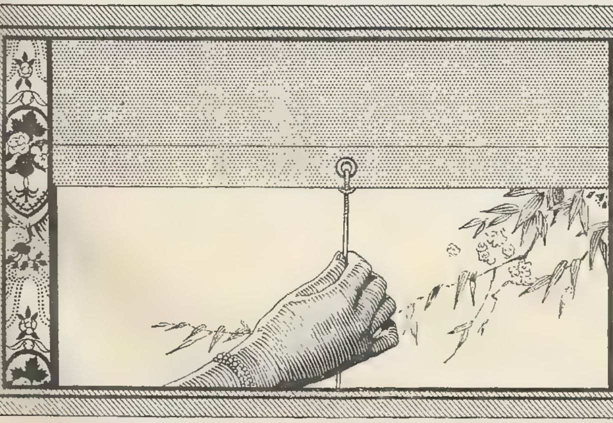
A tiny cushion, cool as velvet, fits over the corn—relieving the pressure. The pain stops at once. Soon the corn goes.

Blue=jay leaves nothing to guess-work. You do not have to decide how much or how little to put on. Each downy plaster is a complete standardized treatment, with just the right amount of the magic medication to end the corn.

Blue=jay

THE QUICK AND GENTLE WAY TO END A CORN

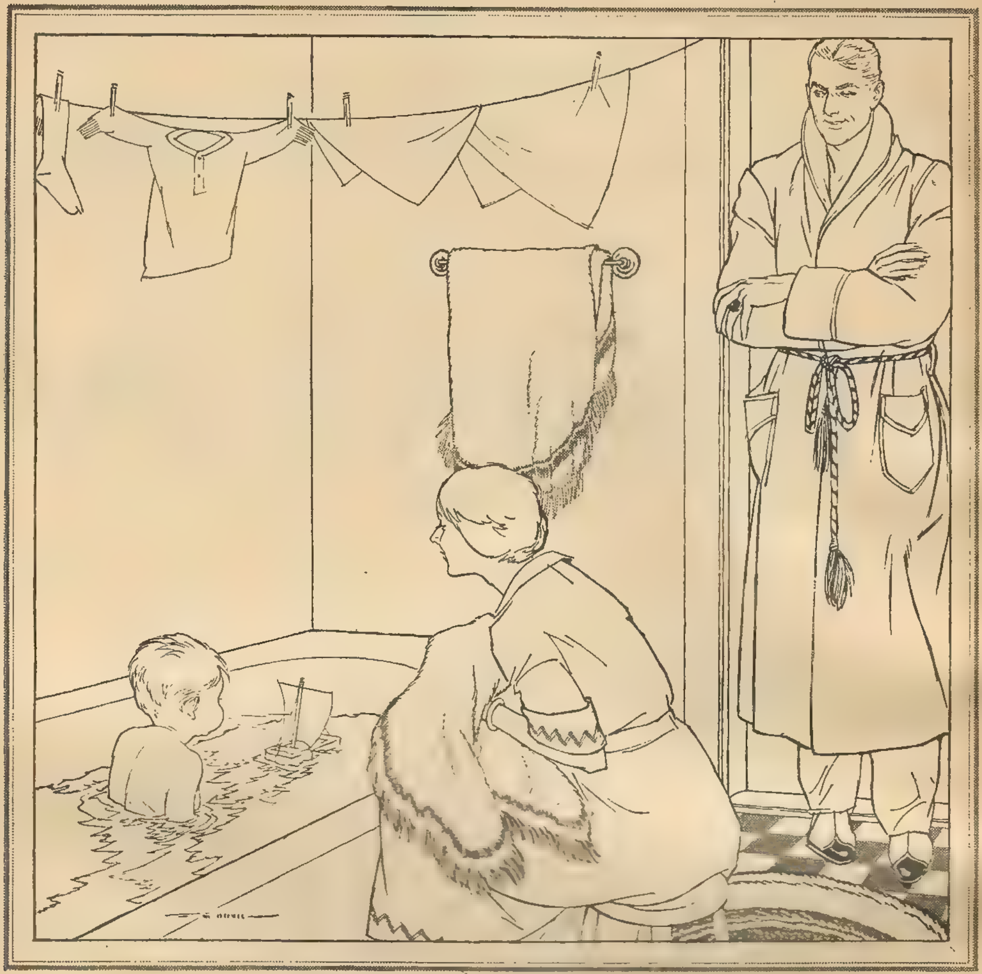
© 1925



FOR
LOVELY
HOMES

Hartshorn

Shade Rollers and
Shade Fabrics



To a second fiddle

When the Really Important Male arrives, you, sir, the so-called head of the house, become a thing to be "hushed" at and shunted into ignominious corners. Feminine whisperings and the rustling of starched linen fill the electrified air.

Even that tiled temple of cleanliness where you have been wont to splash and carol of a morning is invaded by His New Lordship's ladies-in-waiting.

Garments of curious design dominate the towel rack—bottles of unfamiliar outline and content are everywhere.

But one old friend remains to greet your eye—for there in its accustomed place, in all its white purity, is your cake of Ivory Soap.

Take comfort in the sight, for Ivory is the bond that will draw you and your son together—the bridge across the vast crevasse of feminine interference.

Another Ivorian is in the making!

Let spotless walls be spangled with gobs of creamy Ivory lather. Let the floor be dotted with soapy pools.

For by these signs, you know that this son of yours is doing all the messy, woman-worrying, soul-satisfying things that normal men do when enjoying an Ivory bath.

PROCTER & GAMBLE

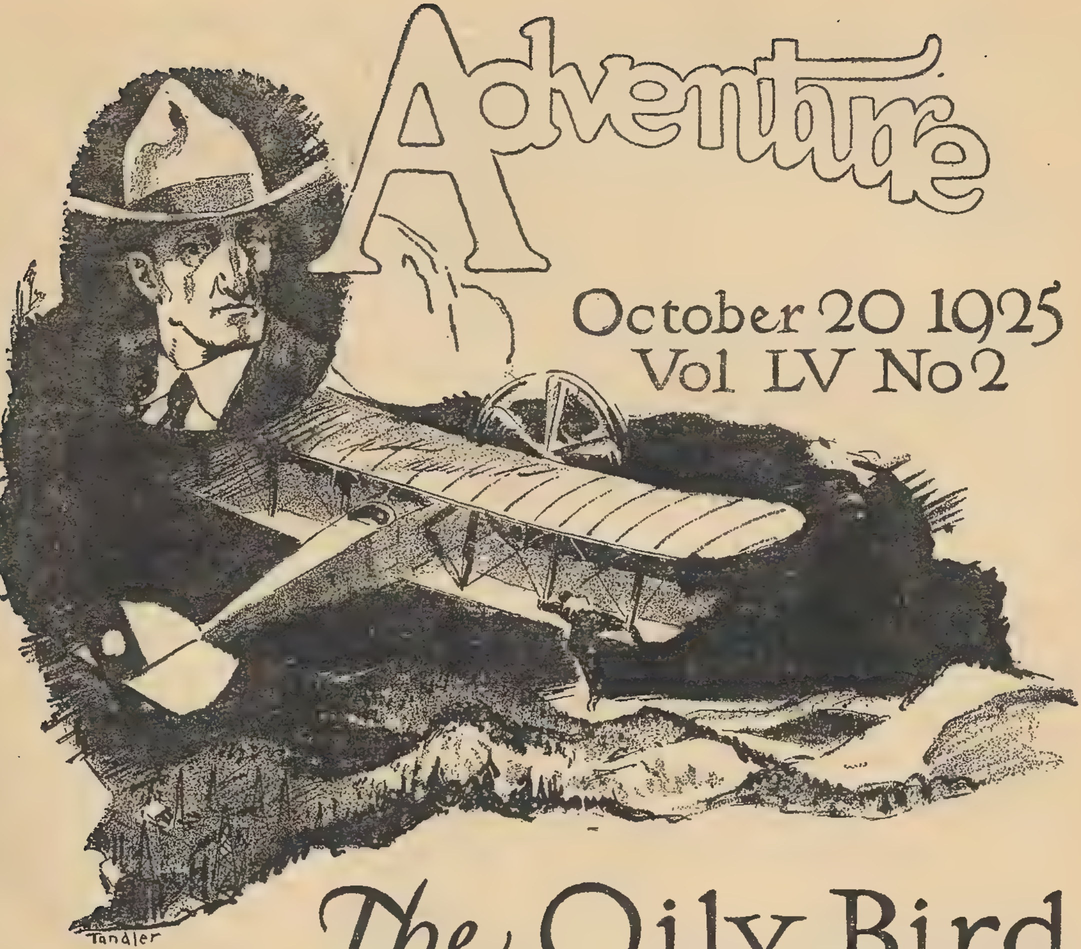
IVORY SOAP

99 44/100 % Pure · It Floats

Guest Ivory *is the younger generation of the man's size cake. A real chip off the old block for 5 cents.*

Copyright, 1925, by
The Procter & Gamble Co., Cincinnati

Adventure
October 20 1925
Vol LV No 2



The Oily Bird

A Complete Novelette *by Thomson Burtis*

Author of "Slim Grabs Some Grease," "Marston and Me," etc.

YOUNG Jerry Madden watched the drill-stem of Junior No. 1 boring steadily down into the bowels of the earth. To a part owner in a prospective oil well, in which rôle Madden was at the moment, the progress being made was not superficially encouraging. At twelve hundred feet they had struck rock, and no one knew just how thick the layer was. As long as it lasted, it meant that a special bit would grind away, reducing the rock to dust; and that a few inches a day was plenty of progress. However, as Jerry remarked philosophically to Mr. Ezekial Haslam, his rotund and middle-aged companion:

"It's —— to watch, but it would be worse if there wasn't any rock. It means the formation is holding up, anyway!"

The crew of roughnecks, under the supervision of "Greasy" Hemingway, a driller of parts, had little to do. They lounged around in overalls and flannel shirts and big straw hats that were one and all splotched with oil. The boiler man, over at the big cylindrical boiler set a hundred and fifty feet from the towering hundred-and-twelve-foot derrick, had to move occasionally; and Hemingway, at the throttle of the little engine which ran the rotary rig, had to keep his head up. The others had nothing to do until it came time to attach another "fourble"—a length of hollow drill-stem—to the hundreds of feet of it underneath the ground. This would not come until the fourble now attached had gone down to the surface of the derrick floor. And at two inches a day that time does not come often.

Copyright, 1925, by The Ridgway Company in the United States and Great Britain. All rights reserved.

The well was isolated. Not another one, in fact, was to be seen. North of the derrick the mesquite crowded closely on the well, and to the west fringes of scrubby trees ran up to within a hundred feet of the two crude frame buildings which were, respectively, a bunk-house for the roughnecks and the tool-house. Southward, however, there was a cleared space of several hundred yards, with only two trees therein. In addition to the trees, an airplane, the property of Jerry Madden, glistened in the sun.

There were no spectators, aside from Jerry and Mr. Zeke Haslam; and it was difficult to believe that ten miles northward lay the tremendous boom town of Hadley—and that to the north of Hadley, and even east and west of it, there were hundreds of wells like Junior No. 1. With the important exception that those hundreds of wells crowding on one another were practically all flowing anywhere from three hundred to eight thousand barrels of liquid gold a day.

"Well, so long, Greasy," called Jerry. "See you tomorrow, boys."

The roughnecks waved a farewell, and Greasy, after spitting profusely, remarked—

"Wish't I c'd git tuh town as quick every night as you're gonna in that plane."

"If gas wasn't so high, I'd ferry you, Greasy," grinned Jerry. "C'mon, Mr. Haslam. Oh, by the way, Greasy, any more scouts been out lately?"

"Potter o' the Southeastern, and "Squint" Conroy."

"So Squint's still bothering around, is he?" drawled Jerry. "He'll get a look at the log sooner or later, if trying counts."

"Not unless that squint eye o' his'n can look through wood and iron, he won't," grunted Greasy.

With which statement he turned his attention again to his motor, set close alongside the derrick floor, whence its belts turned a huge cylinder, which in turn worked the rotary rig that held the drill-stem in its claws.

"I ain't aimin' to get too curious, son," stated Mr. Haslam, wiping his fleshy and perspiring face with a florid handkerchief. "But is it out o' order t' inquire how she's lookin'?"

"So far, believe it or not, the formation is holding up since we reached eight hundred feet. On top, we thought we had a bloomer," Madden told him. "Of course, you understand that you're not to tell a soul—"

"I wasn't born yesterday," Haslam told him.

He took off his helmet, and wiped a bald head free of moisture. As he did so, a huge diamond ring scintillated with blinding radiance on one pudgy finger. Of all the men on earth who did not look the part of a flying enthusiast, "Zeke" Haslam, retired oil operator, was probably chief. He was short and fat and bald, with a stomach of awe-inspiring dimensions. His fleshy face and hanging jowls were the setting for a pair of remarkably shrewd and kind gray eyes.

"Well," he went on reflectively, "Havin' got mine, and being out o' the oil game forever, God willin', I can look at it unprejudiced-like. An' I can say that if you get a well here you'll sure turn this man's town, an' this field, upside down."

"I know it," stated Jerry. "And we're trying. As you know, we've got just about enough money to sink this one wildcat, after leasing thirty acres of land. Every roughneck on the job, including Greasy Hemingway, put in a few thousand he'd made leasing, or something like that, and the members of the company are likewise the working crew. So we're all trying."

"How come you're still flyin' instead o' workin'—"

"Laying up a little money for the company in case unusual expenses come up," Jerry told him. "I've got three thousand in all ready, and by the time the well's down to the sand—if any—my share'll be close to four thousand, if business keeps up."

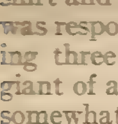
"None o' yore crew is apt to fool with Squint Conroy, are they?" inquired Haslam as they reached the ship.

"Every one of them knows him for what he is—the crookedest shyster, promoter and land-hog in the midcontinent field," Jerry returned placidly. "They're wise. And there's a guard on, every night. Well, ready to spin the prop for me?"

The huge young Texan climbed into the cockpit, turned on the gas, and then primed the motor as Haslam, with surprizing agility, spun it around. Then Jerry snapped on the switch, yelled "Oh!" and waited, hand on throttle. Haslam spun it, Jerry jazzed the gun, and the hundred-and-sixty-horsepower motor sang into life.

Jerry Madden, born and brought up in the oil-fields, had finally realized the ambition he had harbored ever since his army days. There, as a mechanic in the air service he had acquired a consuming love for flying. And the love of the mad, bad, high-gambling life of the oil-fields, with its fortunes always just around the corner and its hand-to-hand struggles against the forces of nature, had been imbedded in him from his earliest days. His father—often called "Shoot-it-all" Madden—had been one of the best drillers and most picturesque characters in the midcontinent fields for years before his death. That he had always been willing to risk his last cent—including his shirt and spare socks—on any chance at all, was responsible for the fact that, after making three sizable fortunes in oil, his young giant of a son had been left an orphan with somewhat less than two thousand dollars in the world.

But that did not worry the drawling, placid, devil-may-care young oil man at all. He had learned to fly in the Army, and now was combining the two things which he loved best; gambling in oil and sending an airplane dipping and looping and singing through the sky. His passenger-carrying business was nothing to be sneezed at, either. An average of fifty dollars a day, gross receipts, was not bad. He had to chuckle at the idea of making money so pleasantly.



AND his experience had made him a real flyer. As he gave the ship the gun and wove it easily through the opening between the two trees, he handled it with the effortless ease of the born flyer. It took the air smoothly, droned around the field a few times for altitude and then set its nose for the pasture lot which did duty as the Madden flying-field.

The field was two miles south of Hadley, and consequently only a five-minute trip from Junior No. 1. As the ship sped along, going higher all the time, the forest of derricks north of Hadley was plainly discernible. It was a far stretching panorama of Gargantuan industry, as thousands of roughnecks toiled on derrick floors. Pipe lines criss-crossed the field, and the field was a network of deeply rutted roads. There were oil stains everywhere. Great iron storage tanks loomed blackly against the ground, and on the railroad sidings at the edge of the town there were endless trains of oil cars. Hadley itself was a compact mass of shacks, tents, permanent buildings, cars, and people. The main street was absolutely black with vehicles, and the sidewalks a solid mass of slowly moving pedestrians. A terrifically hot sun blazed down on the whole superb, unlovely scene.

As Jerry flew along he decided to give Haslam, his best customer, a good ride for his money. The rotund little oil man loved to stunt. He was an almost daily visitor at Madden Field, and paid his dollar a minute for a ride. As Jerry came above the field—a large corn-stubble pasture with a canvas hangar at the western end of it—he saw a car on the roadway, and two men beside it.

Madden turned to his passenger, gestured significantly, and Haslam nodded delightedly. They were fifteen hundred feet high. Jerry nosed down until the *Jenny* was roaring along at a hundred and fifteen miles an hour. Then he pulled back smoothly on the stick, and the ship arched over on its back in a perfect loop. Using the speed of the rush out of the loop, Jerry jerked the stick back in the corner and gave the ship full rudder. It shot upward, made a complete horizontal turn, and then swooped out of a barrel-roll.

Only twelve hundred feet now, but again the nose went in the air, rudder went on, and then the nose dropped sickeningly. The next second the ship was corkscrewing downward in a tailspin, motor throttled. The earth spun dizzily. It seemed as though the ship was suspended, and that a spinning world was rushing up to meet it. Then Jerry brought it out—opposite rudder and stick all the way forward—and the next minute the ship was sweeping toward the ground in a mere tight spiral. Gradually the young Texan, his eyes still glowing with the satisfaction of a flying enthusiast who has had a few minutes playtime in the air, worked the *Jenny* east of the field and dropped it across the fence. He was headed for the hangar, and only three feet above the smooth field.

Somehow, though, the ship did not settle to earth as it should. Half way across the field Jerry knew that he was not losing speed. The throttle had stuck. The engine, instead of idling, was turning up nearly a thousand revolutions a minute. Even if he cut the switches now, the speed was too great. The ship would roll on into the hangar, if it came to earth at all.

Instantly, he shoved the throttle all the way ahead. Have to circle the field and try again. Then, without warning, the motor simply died. The gas feed had become plugged with some refuse.

It was one of those swift emergencies which come so often in flying. There was nothing to do but hit the ground, and then try to "ground-loop." That meant a wreck, and hundreds of dollars' worth of damage. The pilot was tense and strained as the *Jenny*, its motor dead, lost speed. The flyer pulled the stick back and the ship landed smoothly, but going fast. The hangar seemed to be rushing toward him. It was less than a hundred feet away now. As though in a dream Jerry saw one of the waiting men running swiftly toward the ship, coming at it diagonally.

He inched on right rudder. Abruptly the wing dropped—as he knew it would. He was headed for the automobile now. He had had a wild idea of easing the ship around in a wide circle which might save a wreck. There was nothing to do now but jam on all the rudder there was.

Relaxing his muscles for the smash-up when the wing dug into the ground the grim-faced pilot thrust his right foot all the way forward. At that instant a tall form appeared from nowhere. As the wing dipped farther something lifted it. Abruptly the ship spun all the way around—undamaged. And on the wing which he had literally lifted from the ground a very tall, slender, but wide-shouldered man was keeping a death-like grip, his body braced and leaning far backward. He had turned the ship single-handed.

The plane made a three-hundred-and-sixty-degree turn, with the newcomer acting as a human pivot. It ended up facing the hangar again, and absolutely undamaged.

Jerry crawled out, followed by the white-faced Haslam, and stood face to face with one of the most remarkable looking men he had ever seen.

"Thank you," the big pilot said quietly, and stuck out his hand.

"Don't mention it," returned the stranger, smiling a thin-lipped smile. "You're Jerry Madden, I assume?"

"Right. And this is my best customer—Mr. Haslam."

"My name's Braden," stated the stranger, and shook hands with Haslam.

His eyes gravitated toward the ring on Haslam's finger.

"A fine stone, sir," he said courteously. "Mind if I look at it?"

While he was examining the great diamond, of which the flamboyant, loudly dressed Haslam was so naïvely proud, Jerry took time to size up Braden in detail. Jerry himself was six feet one, and Braden's slate eyes had looked levelly into his own. Jerry himself, with shoulders as wide as a door and such physical development as only years of back-breaking toil can give a man of twenty-five, was strong as a bull. But the feat performed by the stranger in lifting the wing and turning the ship was one which indicated that Braden's rather slender body and shoulders were muscled with steel cable.

Most arresting of all, however, to the tanned young Texan, was Braden's face. It was crowned by a Stetson, and beneath the wide brim his countenance stood out with bold, hawk-like strength. It was rather narrow, and above the longest and narrowest eyes Jerry had ever seen the eyebrows were highly arched. They would have lent a quizzical touch to the average frontpiece, but in Braden's case this effect was eliminated by the underlying harshness of his other features. His aquiline nose swept boldly forward above a wide, thin mouth which drooped ever so slightly at one corner. The lean cheeks merged into a square, out-thrust jaw. The leathery skin appeared to be stretched very tightly across the bone, although there were deep furrows running from each thin nostril to the corners of his mouth.

Braden seemed to be about thirty-five, and deep in the narrow, slate-gray eyes, and speaking loudly from the saturnine mouth and aggressive jaw, there was strength and recklessness, and a curiously disturbing mockery.

He was dressed in smartly cut whipcord breeches, high laced boots, and a Norfolk jacket of the same material as the trousers. His shirt was white, and a carelessly tied tie garnished the soft collar. His Stetson was light gray, set a trifle to one side on his head. Gray hairs showed here and there among the dark brown on the side of his head.

"I'll venture to say you paid about five thousand dollars for it, retail," Braden was saying in his deep voice and precise syllables. "However, that statement is not meant to be a question."

HE STRAIGHTENED, and his eyes turned to Jerry. There was a curious spot of light in them as he looked over the pilot. Madden's face was deeply tanned, and below the helmet and pushed-up goggles his gray eyes were wide set and steady. There were tiny weather-wrinkles around them, and in the set of his generous jaw and wide mouth there was quiet capability. Boyhood and early manhood in the oilfields, with the air service in France sandwiched in between, are enough to give any man in his twenties a thirty-year-old appearance.

"You're the man who caught the crooks who robbed the Hadley bank; using your plane, you landed and held 'em up single handed, aren't you?" he said directly.

"Uh huh," answered Madden, lighting a cigaret which he rolled himself.

"Can I speak to you privately a moment?"

"Sure."

The taxi-driver was sitting at ease on the running board of his car, uninterested. The two men moved to the other side of the ship, and then the forthright, capable-appearing stranger came directly to the point.

"I saw your plane in the air when I arrived this morning. I heard about you when I inquired; and I knew your father by reputation. I think—I know—that you're the man I may need. Because I think I may need you I've got a proposition to make to you. Interested?"

"Don't know, yet," drawled Madden.

The thin lips in front of him dropped slightly as Braden stood in silent appraisement a moment before going on.

"It's just this. I'm an oil man. When I operate, I may say without conceit, I operate. I'm on the trail of something big; and I may need you and your plane. To make sure I have it, I'll give you a salary of twenty dollars a day to keep your ship idle and in good shape. The only time you or the ship flies is when I use you. When I use you, I'll pay the usual dollar a minute rate. I may want some flying lessons. Had a few in California, and I want more. But the main thing is that you and your plane be always available for my use. Interested?"

He talked incisively, with an air of knowing exactly where he was going and getting there as speedily as possible.

"Just one thing makes me hesitate, Braden," Madden said slowly. "I'm in oil a little, myself. And the money I make here—flying—goes into a proposition I'm in, and it's more'n twenty a day. On the other hand, of course, the less flying I do the less risk I take—"

"Of cracking up and being able to make nothing at all," Braden filled in for him. "Madden, I'm not doing this with my eyes shut. I know you better than you think. And if you stick by me you won't lose—and I'm going to be up to my neck in Hadley oil before three days are over. You're one of the partners in Junior No. 1, aren't you?"

"Uh huh."

"How does she look?"

The question was like the snap of a whip, but Madden eyed his cigaret, looked Braden right in the eye, and said equably—

"Too early yet to tell."

"I see."

Again those arresting eyes seemed to be dancing with mocking lights, like imps deep in their depths, although the bold face did not change in the slightest.

"I respect your secretiveness about the matter," Braden told him. "I understand you're guarding the log of the well like so much gold, and aren't letting anybody in on it. That's right. Just one word to you folks, though. Look out for Squinty Conroy."

Madden eyed Braden with mounting wonder. How in the world did this utter stranger, who admitted he had just come to Hadley that morning, know so much about conditions?

He cogitated briefly, regarding Braden's proposition. Then Braden made up his mind for him.

"I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll take a twenty-minute lesson every day, and that'll make up your forty a day with only twenty minutes flying. Done?"

"Done!" agreed the nonplussed airman.

"Good. My word's my bond, and I know yours is. If you get any higher bids, you stick to me. Right?"

Madden nodded.

"See you later. Got some things I want to talk about—if the next few hours bring on what I think they will. Suppose you meet me at nine o'clock tonight in Slater's saloon on main street. Can you?"

"Uh huh."

"All right. Now I've got to look for a place to live. You can't get a cot in this man's town. Don't know of any place, do you?"

Madden hesitated. This driving stranger, with the peculiar eyes and the forceful personality, had the calm Texan in somewhat of a whirl, for the moment.

"I'll see what I can do," Braden said finally. "Keep our arrangements a secret from everybody but Haslam, please. I want him to know. I'd like to do some business with him, if I can. I'll see him later. Ready, driver?"

The jehu nodded as quickly as the hookworm would let him.

"So long, everybody!" shouted Braden as long strides took him to the car.

A moment later he was rattling toward town in the senile Ford.

"Now, just who might that be?" queried Haslam plaintively.

"Search me," returned Madden gently. "But he saved me a ship, which is no laughing matter, any way you look at it, and he's hired me as private aerial chauffeur at forty bucks a day, guaranteed, and he wants to do some business with you and me, and we've got a date—or I have, and you might as well come along if you're as curious as I am—at nine tonight in Slater's saloon. And he didn't take ten minutes to do it all."

Mr. Ezekial Haslam, whose guileless face and pudgy body camouflaged the bone, sinew and brain of a man who had fought his way up from the bottom in the hardest game in the world, eyed his ring as he said sadly—

"Honest, Jerry, I'm afraid that there *hombre* is gonna inveigle me intuh somethin'!"

II

SHORTLY after eight o'clock that evening Madden's hatless head might be seen towering above the swirling crowd of roughnecks, drillers, lease-hounds, prostitutes, big company land men, well scouts, and crooks and gamblers of various varieties who composed the motley mob which crowded the narrow sidewalks of the formerly quiet little Texas town which was Hadley. Paddling along beside him like the tail to a kite was Mr. Ezekial Haslam. They were making their leisurely way toward Slater's saloon, which was really not only a saloon but a gambling house, dance hall and bar, combined.

A solid mass of cars was banked at the curb, and behind them streams of moving vehicles clotted the rutted and torn main street. On all sides there was oil talk.

"Fifteen thousand for ten acres! I sold 'im that lease—" "And if Standard No. 4 comes in above five hundred barrels I won't take a cent less than—" "I hear Massey figures his wildcat's only a gasser, and Hurley is stuck on that Graham tract—" "I tell you, Mr. Adams, that this lease is a buy! Why, it's offset from the Jager tract, that the Texas paid five hundred an acre for—"

Jerry's level gray eyes were alight with a certain soft glow of pleasure, as the shouts and cries and laughs and pleas of the familiar oil boom washed against his ears. In his big, deliberate body there was hidden a living flame which required excitement, zest, the lure of big things, to feed it. And the oil game, like flying, never grew old to him. Nor to Haslam, which was the reason why that comfortably fixed operator lived in a boom town, instead of hieing himself to the flesh pots of Florida, California or New York.

The stores lining the street were all open, their doors flung wide, and within them crowds fought to buy. Restaurants had men waiting in line, and temporary booths, filling every inch of available space, did a land-office business in everything from hot dogs to oil stock. Here was a big tent, with the sign, "Cots for rent—$5 a night." A considerable number of the oil-spotted roughnecks were under the influence of the demon rum, but in general it was a good-natured crowd. There was a saloon about every fifth door, and many of them had sidelines in addition to liquor selling. Pervading everything was a spirit of wild excitement and unrest, as if every person was living at a breakneck pace.

Suddenly Madden's eyes caught a familiar Stetson, projecting above the crowd.

"There's Braden," he told Haslam. "Hi, Braden!"

As Braden turned, his jutting profile leaped into startling relief against the lighted store windows behind him. He threw his head back slightly in recognition, and plunged through the currents of the crowd toward Madden. As he came closer his long, slit-like eyes were like lines of light beneath the shade of his hat brim.

"Haslam interested in Junior No. 1?" he said tersely.

"No, but he's the only man that isn't

who knows all about it," returned Madden evenly. "Why?"

"Wanted to know whether to talk in his presence or not," stated Braden. "I had a little talk with Squinty Conroy this afternoon—"

"Hey, Jerry!"

It was Greasy Hemingway, driller extraordinary. A stroll down the six long blocks which composed Hadley's main street usually resulted in meeting about every one in the oil business in that field, if the stroll was taken after eight o'clock at night.

Without ceremony Hemingway drew Jerry to one side, glancing briefly at Braden as he did so.

"Squinty Conroy was out to the well after you left, an' he offered me a hundred dollars t' show him the log o' the well," he told Madden.

"What'd you tell him?" inquired Jerry.

"Threw him off the place," grunted Hemingway. "But listen, Jerry. You know Conroy's reputation. He's got some money, and no honesty whatsoever. He went away sore as a boil. I been in town roundin' up the boys that're off t'night. We're gonna have an extra guard on that well from now on. Squinty's been sore at us anyway, and now—"

"Pardon me," Braden cut in smoothly.

He had edged close to the two while they were talking.

"We've got no time to lose. Listen—I overlook no bets. Had a talk with Conroy within two hours. I pretended I was willing to gang up with him on any deal we could fix up. Wanted to get the dope. See what he had up his sleeve. He's going to send some of his men out to your well tonight—late, I suppose—and just break in and get the log book by hook or crook. If the log looks good so far, he's going to snap up that acreage north of you, which is for sale at thirty dollars an acre. He can't handle the Farwell tract—too much money and a thousand acre tract—but as usual, Squinty Conroy isn't going to spend a dime without knowing all there is to know."

The big pilot's eyes probed steadily into the coolly glowing eyes a few inches from his own, and then he asked abruptly:

"Braden, what are you going to all this trouble for? Did you say you'd throw in with Conroy, and then come and tell us his plans? And if so, why?"

"Madden, the oil game is funny," Braden told him. "I overlook no bets, as I said before. I told Conroy I'd supply more than half the money for half of any profits in any deal, if he'd use his facilities for information. He mentioned this deal. I took it all in, told him to go ahead. Then I came and told you. Why? Because I know —— well, from the way you're all acting, that so far that —— wildcat of yours is proving up the formation. And I want to be on the inside with you fellows, so that I can make some money on surrounding acreage. I want to get the news before anybody else, and cash in on it. I wouldn't go in with Conroy under any circumstances—he's too crooked. I wouldn't go in with him on a stunt like tonight's, because I'm not a crook. And I do want to get in with you boys—"

"Great —— Almighty, let's hustle—" started Hemingway, who was an individual prone to worry. Madden glanced at his watch, and interrupted:

"We've got to get out there fast. If Squinty gets a look at the log we-all won't have a chance to lease another acre—he'll have it all. But I wanted to get all this straight in my mind before I went off at half-cock."

"And those felluhs won't be out there fur three hours yet!" stormed Hemingway. "I told Pete an' Jim and Ally tuh git there at midnight—"

"Squinty'll be working before that," snapped Braden.

Madden decided the matter swiftly.

"I know every foot of that field. I'll fly over."

"Me with you," stated Hemingway; thereby beating Haslam to the word by a split-second.

"As long as you're not surprized, you'll have no trouble beating them off," Braden told them. "Meet me at Slater's saloon if you get back before two o'clock. If I knew anybody I could get I'd load up a car with 'em—"

"I'll do that in my car," Haslam cut in. "C'mon, boys. I'll drive yuh to the field first."

Once in Haslam's big touring car, they made time, even over those roads. Every oil man is accustomed to navigating over mere rutted trails, often knee-deep in gumbo mud. Any dry road, even if the ruts were deep enough to bury a man, bothered Haslam. The fat little oil man settled behind the wheel and drove like a demon.

AS THE car took the bumps like a skimming swallow, Madden's fast-working mind was striving to arrange all the elements of the situation in his mind. Squinty Conroy's part was easy enough. Junior No. 1 was one of the only two wildcat wells at present going down in the Hadley Field. It was being sunk in territory more than ten miles from the proved field, and the opinion of all the "rock-hounds"—geologists—was that there was no oil south of Hadley. Two wells had been sunk nearer Hadley, and both had been dry. But a young Harvard geologist—an army friend of Jerry's, and a man with a reputation—had surveyed the ground with great care and secrecy; and had given his opinion that ten miles south of town, on a tract beginning at a line on which the Junior well was going down, might have oil under it. He had invested a thousand dollars, himself, in the company formed by Madden.

As always, the mere fact that a wildcat well is going down had stimulated a certain amount of trading in offset acreage. All the acreage surrounding the tract which the Junior No. 1 Company had purchased, had changed hands several times, until the present price was thirty dollars an acre; which was high, considering the supposedly barren territory. High, that is, unless one knew that the formation was holding up. Squinty Conroy wanted to gobble that acreage if the well looked to have a chance to prove up. If he could get a copy of the log—and make sure that the formation which is common to that streak of the earth under which there is oil, was holding up—he could count on reselling the acreage he had bought at thirty for much more, even before the well came in. Or he might gamble, and hold on on the chances of bigger profits. But the unscrupulous operator's usual method was to take a sure profit—and he always knew what he was doing. Bribery and force were his methods of getting information. He planned to quietly slug the three guards that night, get a peep at the log, and act accordingly. And if he did so it meant that the Junior No. 1 Company, after they got hold of a little more capital, would have no chance to buy more acreage at anything but an exorbitant price. It is the privilege of those men who gamble from twenty to forty thousand dollars in sinking a wildcat well to keep all details as to how good it looks to themselves; and to snap up acreage offset from their well before any one else knows how valuable it is. Even if the wildcatters are down to the sand, have taken a core, and are fairly certain there is oil there, they are still gambling when they buy more acreage, for there is nothing sure in the oil business. But Conroy was taking no chance. The acreage he was after had reached a price of thirty dollars an acre, merely because smart lease-hounds had passed it from hand to hand on the strength of a well's being sunk. If Conroy could show that the log of the well indicated that the formation was holding up, he could automatically turn over the acreage at a large profit, and it would stimulate trading all along the line. To an oil man, the importance of formation is tremendous. It is possible for geologists to tell, for instance, by data from other fields, just how deep the gravel layer should be, and the rock layer, and the pay-sand.

All this was taken for granted by Madden and Hemingway. It was the merest A.B.C. of the oil business. But in the pilot's mind there was one annoying, tantalizing question. Who was Braden, what was he about, and just what was going on behind that bold, reckless face? Why was he interesting himself so much in Madden's ship, and the well? Of one thing the gigantic young Texan was certain.

Mr. Braden, antecedents unknown, motives unknown, and resources unknown, was no deuce in whatever deck he happened to find himself. And high cards are important in any game.

It seemed less than a half minute, although it really was a little more than four minutes flat, before the big car snorted up alongside the canvas hangar at the edge of the moonlit flying-field. It took the three men less than a minute to trundle the *Jenny* out of its happy home, and then, with Haslam at the propellor and Madden in the cockpit and Hemingway getting the blocks under the wheels just in time, the eight-cylinder motor sprang into life.

Jerry warmed it carefully, although every nerve in his body was tingling with anticipation. He had never flown at night before, and there are easier feats to accomplish. The trip ahead, and the fight ahead—both were after his own heart. Beneath his equable exterior, his heart was bounding joyfully.

Hemingway was ready in the back seat,

and Haslam already streaking back toward town, his headlights shooting rays of light hundreds of feet ahead of him. With a little gulp of excitement, Madden shoved the throttle all the way ahead and held the stick forward.

The motor ran with miraculous smoothness in the cool night air, and the palely glistening ship rushed across the smooth ground like some shining monster of the night. It took off well back of the fence, and in a moment Madden had banked around for one circle of the field. He had no time for the fairy-like panorama below, where all that was ugly was hid in shadow, and the rest transfigured in the silver moonlight. He pointed the nose straight for Junior No. 1, due south, and with throttle wide open covered the ground at a hundred miles an hour. Behind him Hadley was ablaze with light, and its surging crowds looked southward in wondering disbelief as they heard that drumming roar, and picked up the banners of flame which gushed from the ship's exhausts.

As he neared the derrick, Madden decided to circle it. He could see three men burst forth from the bunkhouse and look up. Then, half a mile back along the trail leading from a road to the well, he saw a car, with lights out, and standing still.

He circled more widely as he pointed out the car to Hemingway. Then his eyes scrutinized the ground, deep in the shadow of the mesquite, to find out whether he could spot any prowlers. But it was too dark to see below the scrubby trees. He was positive, however, that that car had held Conroy's crew of thugs.

It was the work of a moment, low as he was, to circle around and glide for the field. He was taut in his seat, wondering whether the darkness would fool him.

It did—but not too much. He leveled off, and found he was fully ten feet off the ground. He inched the plane down, bit by bit, so busy at his task that he did not see five men rush from the shelter of the mesquite, and run for the bunkhouse.

Hemingway did, but he said nothing. He was too frightened, momentarily. Not until the ship hit the ground with a thud did he speak; and then it was a wild war-cry which could be heard far above the noise of the idling motor.

"Hustle, Jerry! They're all fightin' now!"

There was no gun-play as the two men streaked toward the bunkhouse. Murder would be too raw, even for Squinty Conroy. But five men were rapidly disposing of three.

Madden distanced Hemingway by almost half. As he came within ten feet of the deadly struggle he saw that one of his men was stretched on the ground, another about to join him, and that the third, big Garry Hawkins, was still fighting like a wildcat with his back against the tool-shed.

And there were but four assailants—all masked. One was gone—and the bunkhouse light was on.

Madden merely stopped in passing to administer a straight smash to one man who turned to grapple with him. Eluding another—Hawkins was the only defender left, now—he catapulted into the bunkhouse.

He did better than he knew. As he hurtled in the door he was just in time to hit, with the force of a battering ram, a man who was emerging with a little iron box under his arm. The man went to the floor, and as he did so Madden was on him. The next instant the box was hurled into the corner, and then the mask came off.

Jerry, his eyes blazing with a mad lust for battle which was rarely aroused within him, methodically lifted the man's head and battered it against the floor. Two caresses from the board planking lulled the big hijacker to sleep.

Jerry bounded to his feet just in time. Evidently Hawkins was finally disposed of, for two masked men tumbled into the room. There was but a small space to move in, for four beds around the walls took up most of the space.

Madden got the first one, but the second hit him a terrific blow in the stomach, just as his comrade sank to the floor. Madden, dazed and gasping, reeled back over a bed and collapsed. He was just arising when the third hijacker burst in and his comrade landed with a thud on Madden's partially recumbent body.

There was a shot outside.

"Take that, you ——!" roared Greasy Hemingway.

And a moment later he was in the doorway, chewing his melancholy mustache ferociously. He was elected presiding officer of the bunkhouse, with his gun for a gavel, just in time to prevent Jerry from being kicked and beaten half to death.

The flyer staggered to his feet, and leaned against the wall limply. Neither of the men on the floor had moved, and the other two had their hands in the air. Hemingway strode up to them and ripped their masks off.

"Know any of 'em, Jerry?" he inquired.

Madden shook his head.

"I've seen a couple of 'em around, but I don't know—"

"Neither do I. But I aim t' find out."

"Wait a minute, Greasy," Madden interposed. "Ive got a better idea. These yeggs don't matter to us. From now on there'll be one man awake around this joint all the time, and there'll be shotguns in profusion with the boys ordered to shoot fluently, so to speak. The one we want to get is Squinty Conroy—and I'm just the boy that's going to pay him back for the belts in the belly I've taken recently."

He talked calmly, in the softly slurred Southern drawl, which was slower, in his case, than the average Texan expressed himself with. But there was a grim look around his jaw which belied the gentleness of his words.

He turned to the man nearest him—a tall, lantern-jawed, pig-eyed specimen, with a long scar along his left jawbone, and two teeth gone.

"You were hired by Conroy, weren't you?" he demanded.

The man looked at him sullenly, and said nothing.

"You're the guy that just kicked me in the stomach, and I'm going to make mincemeat out of your face, a bass drum out of your stomach, and a wreck in general out of you, in just about one minute, if you don't talk," Jerry said peacefully as he leaned over the man.

The small eyes shifted to his partner's. Then he grunted—

"Yep."

"Good. Now you get the —— out of here, and carry your friends with you. And remember, you'll all get enough shot in you to load down a truck if you stray on this reservation again. And you tell your boss, Conroy, that Mr. Gerald Madden, perhaps accompanied by a friend of his, will do himself the honor to call on Mr. Conroy some time tomorrow—on business. Get out!"

They took a moment to revive their friends. By that time there were three guns trained on them, and they slunk away through the darkness, as Jerry observed, dragging their tails behind them.

It might be a peculiar thing, anywhere but in a boom town, to allow the five men to leave in peace. But where there is no law, practically speaking, for the individual save that which he enforces for himself by himself, a man handles his own problems. And there are too many small fry to bother with unless a town builds a stockade for criminals, as they did in Mexia, or has a jail big enough to accommodate half the town.

The three roughnecks had been taken completely by surprize. They had been watching and wondering about the ship, and the reasons for its presence.

Before the departure of the ship, however —Hemingway stayed at the well—it had been arranged that a guard should be awake at all times. All men had Colts, but shotguns would also be supplied on the morrow.

"I didn't think things'd get so personal on our little wildcat this early in the game," Jerry grinned in parting. "But if anything more happens I'll guarantee it won't happen through Conroy!"

III

AN HOUR and a half later, at eleven P.M., to be exact, Madden walked through the swinging doors of Slater's saloon and stood for a moment searching for Braden. Haslam was probably on his way back from the well, having arrived much too late to be of service, of course.

Slater's was not as quiet and peaceful as the village of Squeedunk at three o'clock on a Monday morning. The saloon itself was about fifty feet deep, and a shining bar ran the full length on the right-hand side. Bartenders were so thick they touched elbows. Probably a total of over a hundred men tussled and shouted and laughed and sometimes fought in front of it. To the left of the door, as one entered, there were at least a dozen gambling tables. In the center of the railed-off gambling space, there was a huge crap table, and surrounding this center of attraction there were faro, roulette, poker of both the stud and draw varieties, red dog, and other games. The cashier, from whom each player bought all his chips at a ten per cent cut—that is, getting nine dollars' worth of chips, good at any table, for ten dollars—sat in a heavily barred cage to the right of the single opening in the railing. From upstairs there came the raucous tooting of a rotten orchestra, the shrill laughter of women, and the ceaseless clumping of heavy boots. Only the girls—"hostesses"—were allowed behind the railing as spectators. Occasionally a hostess would slip down and try to make something for the house—inveigling a lucky player into a present, or a drink, or something of the sort. It was noisier, even, than the street outside, and that was noisy enough. Jerry, anesthetized to such familiar bedlam, stood coolly in the doorway, answered greetings, and scrutinized the crowd for Braden.

Nowhere in the crowded, noisy, stinking place could he see the man he was after. He went up into the dance hall, fought off three hostesses who wanted him to dance or buy drinks—preferably the latter—and returned into the healthier surroundings below. A dozen men stopped him, and he accepted the offer of one drink from Jason, a stout, freckled, red-headed well-scout for the International Oil Company. Jason wanted information as to how Junior No. 1 was progressing, as did a dozen other men ranging from local dabblers in oil up to Craig, a lease-hound who turned over several thousand dollars' worth of leases a day. To all questions Jerry answered courteously, but non-committally. It was the old game.

Then he saw Braden and Haslam enter, and broke away from his listeners abruptly.

"So you finished the job before we got there, huh?" chortled Haslam. "Snappy work, boy."

Braden nodded, one corner of his mouth drooping a little. There was something a bit more personal, less coolly aloof, in his eyes as he said—

"I'm more and more glad that I tied you up, Madden."

His eyes held the flyer's a minute, and then looked beyond him. Jerry saw a sudden, inexplicable change in the lean face before him—and yet it did not seem that a line had changed. Suddenly the long eyes were as cold and green as a snake's, and what had been a sardonic cast in his face became cruel.

Involuntarily, Madden turned around, and saw that a man standing on the outskirts of the bar crowd was gazing straight into Braden's eyes. He was dressed in blue serge and immaculate white shirt, and his thin face was pallid. His eyes were deep-set, and very dark, like lightless caverns.

Braden walked over to him. Scarcely any one noticed, but to Jerry the air was electric. Something in the way Braden kept his eyes fixed on the other man's was hypnotic. The man in blue, with the ghostly face, did not waver. He held his drink carelessly in his left hand. The other was thrust negligently in his coat pocket.

Braden stooped a trifle, and whispered something to his companion. It did not take more than three seconds for him to say whatever it was he wanted to. Then he straightened. The other man drank off his drink—and there was something coolly insolent in the way he did it. Then he turned to the bar and ordered another, absolutely ignoring Braden.

Braden's face was tranquil as he turned and made his way back to Haslam and Madden. Haslam apparently did not comprehend the little drama—Madden had been the only one to see Braden's face as it had frozen a moment before.

Half way to them, Braden suddenly stopped and lifted his hand in a gesture of recognition.

"Hello, Roj!" he called. "See you in a minute!"

"That's an old friend of mine—Roger Krooz," he explained. "Quite a big operator in the early days of the California fields. Great poker player—for those that play with him. Got a lot of money and can't play much. By the way, do either of you gentlemen enjoy a game?"

He was talking to two native Texans who would rather play poker than nibble at the glossiest cuisine on the American or any other continent.

Braden turned to Jerry and asked frankly—

"Can you stand a twenty-dollar take-out, table-stake game? That's what they're playing over there—"

"*Ho ho ho!*" laughed Haslam, his round face cherubic as his eyes closed tight with mirth. "He ain't lost more'n twice since his daddy taught him back in the old days at Ranger!"

Which was nearly so, but did not seem to hold for that night. Jerry was a poker player of parts—his tanned, contained face never changed, and his gentle drawl neither lengthened nor hurried as he played. He had nerve, knew the game, and was somewhat extraordinary in his power to gauge the value of a hand.

But everything he did in that game seemed to be wrong. He experienced that nightmare which haunts the sleep of a poker player—big hands which were always topped. And he was up against at least two of the best poker players he had ever encountered—particularly Braden. That gentleman, his hawk-like face composed and his eyes totally noncommittal, was as hard to figure as what step a waltzing mouse will execute next. And Krooz, a jovial, red-faced, small-eyed man, did not seem to be the amateur Braden had dubbed him. There were three other men in the game, all strangers.

Braden and Krooz often went to the mat together, betting large amounts. On the showdown, if Krooz did not drop, which he usually did, Braden often showed a small hand like two pairs or small threes. And yet, when the airman called him, he usually had them. Haslam, no wonder as a poker player at best, lost steadily.

FINALLY, in desperation, Madden bought five hundred dollars worth of chips at once. He was among the few men in Hadley whose check was good at the cashier's window. He noticed, as he came back, that the man in blue to whom Braden had spoken, was drinking steadily at the bar—and that most of the time his cavernous eyes were on Braden. That close-mouthed oil man, however, seemed entirely unconcerned.

"I've dropped three hundred, and this stack is my limit," stated Jerry as he came back to his seat.

Ordinarily, he'd have laughed off his loss—being a born gambler. But now he was disgusted with himself, because he felt that every nickel was needed for any emergency at the well. Grimly, he settled down to win.

Fifteen minutes later he had won a few dollars. It came Braden's deal, when suddenly, as Braden picked up the cards after Jerry's cut, a loud and wrathful voice split the silence.

"I'll teach you to step on me, you—"

In a second the crowd at the center section of the bar was a swirling mass of men, and fists and epithets flew promiscuously. All eyes turned toward the mêlée. Braden sat back in his chair, and watched until three experienced and tough—very tough—bouncers cleared four men out of the bar by the napes of their necks and the seats of their pants.

"That's the first tonight. This doesn't seem like an oil town," stated Krooz jovially, as Braden dealt.

Jerry picked up his hand, and found therein three large and luscious aces. Krooz, next to Braden, opened for ten dollars. The three strangers had been pared down to two now—one had had enough, and left. They both stayed, and Haslam kited it twenty-five dollars. Jerry considered the matter at length. There is one maxim which a good poker player always keeps in mind; make as much as you can on a good hand, and lose as little as possible on a poor one. Banking on the free-handed playing of Krooz, Jerry merely stayed for the thirty-five.

He had shot at the moon, and won—he thought. Krooz raised back after Braden had stayed. He raised an even fifty. The two other men dropped, and Haslam re-raised another fifty.

"About big enough," soliloquized Madden, and merely stayed.

Braden dropped.

"How many?" queried Braden; and Krooz took two.

"Not so bad," Jerry told himself as his tranquil eyes watched Krooz's face for some sign of delight or woe.

Haslam took one, as Jerry expected. Mr. Zeke Haslam played an open end flush or straight as though it was already full to the brim.

Madden himself, his big body lounging back in his chair, took two, and secured two fours to make an ace-full. Krooz checked the bet. Haslam bet a hundred, which meant he had filled. He rarely bluffed after the anteing was over.

The pot had already cost Jerry a hundred and eighty five dollars. So he shoved in the rest of his stack.

"There's your hundred—and another two-fifteen," he drawled. "And that's my limit."

It was one of those moments which make the game of poker. And which to a man like Madden, are compounded of the elements which are the high spots of life. The high stakes—higher because they were all he had—the waiting and hoping and wondering all combined to give him a moment of utter delight. Paradoxical as it may seem, the interval of uncertainty, to Jerry, was more enjoyable, fundamentally, than the moment of winning would be.

"Well, that ain't gonna prevent you an' me tying up some more on the side, eh?" chuckled Krooz. "I see our friend Madden, here, and up she goes another two hundred for yore exclusive benefit, Haslam."

"Right back at you!" returned Haslam.

When Haslam finally called, he and Krooz had six hundred dollars apiece on the side. Madden, of course, shared in the pot up to the time his two-hundred-and-thirty-five-dollar raise had been covered by Krooz and Haslam.

Braden, his bold face expressionless, watched the showdown without the faintest sign of emotion. Haslam had four sevens, which he had held to start with. Krooz had drawn his fourth queen. And Jerry, with a mere ace full, was low man.

Madden pushed back his chair.

"Gents, that's my wad," he told them gently. "But it was a game, wasn't it?"

Meanwhile his brain was turning up a thousand revs. a minute. He had been in many an oil-field game—and up against many a crook. Not a shady dodge in the game was unfamiliar to him. Now, as the noise of the saloon was becoming more and more obnoxious, and he could hear Tim Callahan, whose royalties from his former farm were over five thousand dollars a month, shooting four thousand dollars at the crap table, he was thinking. There had been that disorder at the bar—and it was possible that Braden had "cold-decked" the crowd while they were all looking at the fight. If he and Krooz were working together—

"Can I see you a minute, Jerry?" came the deep voice of Braden, and the man rose from the table suggestively.

Madden followed him, and noticed that for an instant the oil man's gaze flickered toward the man at the bar. The pallid stranger was still drinking, saying nothing to any one, and showing no signs of the staggering amount of whisky he had consumed. As Braden's gaze rested briefly on him Madden saw his new acquaintance's mouth droop at one corner in that unutterably sardonic smile. It was like a contemptuous slap in the face of the man in blue.

"Listen, Jerry, it's a shame for you to quit eight hundred in the hole," Braden told him directly. "You're too good a poker player—and you've had the luck of ——. Tell you what I'll do. I'm a big winner, and I've got some money. I'll loan you a couple of thousand to come back with. So that you won't figure it charitable, or anything like that, you can give me an informal mortgage on your share in Junior No. 1 to cover it. Then you'll have a chance to come back."

The temptation was strong. Jerry's level gaze, directly into the long, thin, unreadable eyes of Braden, strove to detect some emotion in them—and could not. For a second the young flyer was conscious of a revulsion from something in Braden which he could not quite name—something cold and cruel and calculating.

"No!" he decided. "I'm game to lose what I've got, but not to make a —— fool of myself."

"Suit yourself," shrugged Braden. "But it won't mean a thing, as far as the deal goes—you'll come back, return me my money, and that'll be all there is to it."

"I'd rather gamble on Junior No. 1 than at that table," Jerry said gently, but there was something in his quiet, contained words which closed the discussion.

"All right, boy," returned Braden, and the thin lips widened in a smile. "Then I'll tell you what I'll do. You're in my employ at forty dollars a day. I'll advance you a week's pay to come back with—two hundred and eighty simoleons."

Madden accepted instantly. His eagerness was increased by the fact that he had a consuming ambition to watch the game even more closely than before—and either prove or demolish the annoying idea he had in his mind about it.

"Have a drink, before we go back," Braden suggested.

After he had ordered two whisky sours he inquired—

"How come you and Haslam are so chummy?"

"We aren't," Madden corrected him. "I've known him a couple of years, and he's a nut on flying. When I got the ship he started being my best customer. He knew my father, likewise. He's just a sort of uncle-by-proxy, or something like that. Except for flying, I don't often see him. Today, of course, was special."

"He can afford to lose, can't he?"

"Sure. He's worth a couple of hundred

thousand, anyway. So much that you couldn't inveigle him into investing another nickel in oil if he saw the gusher flowing and you offered to sell it to him for a quarter."

"I see," Braden said thoughtfully. "I can't do much business with him, then. Anyway, I just wanted to make sure that he wouldn't feel sore at losing, if he should continue to watch his money shrink."

They drank their beverages speedily, and as they started back to the table Braden took Jerry's arm and said—

"I'm going to give you a tip, Madden. Krooz, when he's winner much, or loser much, goes hog-wild. Bets all the time, on anything. Watch him and nab him when you have anything. He's just at the point now."

Madden nodded, drawled a slow "Thanks"—and wondered.

But, almost miraculously, that two hundred and eighty dollars started to grow. Jerry, sunk deep in his chair, and watching every move and expression, played with a concentrated ferocity that overlooked nothing. Try as he would, he could see nothing that smacked of crooked work. He had had a tiny suspicion that Braden, in his words about Krooz, had been trying to lead him on into reckless calling. However, careful observation convinced him that Braden's words held considerable truth. Krooz was betting in a high, wide and handsome fashion, and Jerry started to be chief caller. He called a hundred dollar bet on two pairs—and won. And with three kings he called a two hundred dollar raise of Krooz's—and caught him with a busted flush.

Occasionally he saw Braden's eyes on him, and always the oil man's face held just the hint of a saturnine smile—as though he was cynically amused, watching Jerry rake in the shekels.

At three o'clock in the morning, Madden was a hundred-dollar winner. Braden had, practically speaking, made him a present of nine hundred dollars. And a certain big, young Texan, behind his stoical exterior, was profoundly ashamed of the fact that he had come back into the game partly with the purpose of catching his benefactor stacking cards.

Haslam pushed back his chair.

"I guess a fifteen-hundred-dollar loser can quit," he said jovially. "Been a great game. We'll have another, some time soon, huh? But I'm goin' home now."

"Me too," stated one of the strangers, who had dropped three hundred from a well filled pocket.

The game automatically melted away. Jerry looked around at the bar. The man in blue had left.

As they left, the play at the gambling tables was hitting the ceiling. New-won fortunes of tremendous proportions were represented there; and money, as always when it seems to grow on bushes, had just about as much value as any shrubbery. Men were getting drunker and more reckless. Upstairs the gayety was turning into debauchery; and out on the sidewalk two thirds of the still thick crowd were somewhat under the influence of the cup that cheers.

Braden and Madden led the way out, followed by Haslam. Krooz was still bent on doing some gambling. They went to the curb, and stood beside Haslam's big car. Opposite them, on the other side of the road, there was a line of tents and booths. That had been a scraggly park, lying between the main street and the railroad tracks, before the advent of oil. Like a large number of Texas towns, the main street of Hadley had been built up on only one side. Now, however, the street was lined with tents and cheap board booths, respectively devoted to sleeping accommodations at five dollars a cot, and eating arrangements at twenty cents per hot puppy.

"I'll run yuh home, Jerry," Haslam was saying. "Where do you hang up yore spurs, Mr.—"

THE crack of a pistol cut through the noise of Hadley; and from the opposite side of the street the brief flash of a gun glowed through the darkness. Simultaneously Braden spun half around, and dropped to the ground. One thing was indelibly impressed on Jerry's mind in that split-second of time—even as Braden had whirled and dropped, there had appeared in his hand, with magical swiftness, a gun.

Automatically Madden's huge body went into action. He snatched up Braden's gun and in gigantic bounds crossed the road toward the spot between two tents, from which the flash had come. Behind him people were tumbling out of saloons and restaurants, and a mob was seething around the spot where Braden lay. Careless of the chance that he was taking of being dropped in his tracks, Jerry plunged into the darkness between the tents.

Ordinarily, Pilot Jerry Madden was shaken out of his easy calm about twice a year. It had happened twice today already, and this was one of the times. When it happened, Madden resembled a wild bull on a rampage.

He had Braden's gun in his hand, and as he came clear of the tents on the opposite side he saw a man running. He was close to the railroad tracks, thirty yards away. In kangaroo-like bounds, Madden's long legs ate up the distance.

Dodging behind a tree, the man fired, and Madden could hear the bullet whine past him. However, when he was in a mental blaze such as now, the Texan was immune to fear.

Immediately, the fugitive darted from his shelter, and started running again, bound for the tracks. Madden was vaguely aware of shouts behind him, and thought he heard thudding feet following.

The freight station was close ahead of the fleeing man, now, and in a moment Jerry saw that he would be able to dodge around it. At the corner the man, a mere vague bulk in the gloom, turned again, and once again his gun spat fire. This time Jerry "cracked down on him." He shot with the lack of conscious aim which is a characteristic of the westerner handling a six-gun.

He was a good, even an excellent, shot; but the fact that he made a direct hit was unquestionably due partly to luck. He saw his quarry drop like a stone. In three seconds Madden was leaning over him, looking down into the cavernous eyes of the man in blue serge.

"You got me, kid," he whispered. "I—don't mind. Tell the bulls I'm—Gat O'Geary—"

There was a bloody froth at his lips, and a hole in the center of his chest, where the bullet had passed all the way through, told its own story. Footsteps—many of them—were coming closer as he said weakly, but with terrible eagerness—

"Did—I get that —— good?"

Jerry, applying his handkerchief to the wound, didn't answer.

"Listen!" said the dying man suddenly, and with a terrible effort lifted his head. "Do you know who that is? It's Streak—Bir-the Streak— —— him to ——, I—"

Just as a dozen men at the head of a mob came puffing to the scene, he dropped back weakly. In less than a half minute he was dead.

IV

A HALF hour later, in the office of the doctor who was dressing Braden's wound, Madden was telling Haslam about it—not to mention Braden, who listened with absorbed attention. His wound was merely a furrow, ploughed by the bullet through his side just above the hip-bone.

"I'll be —— if you couldn't have knocked me over by whistling at me, when I heard the chief say that O'Geary had a five hundred dollar reward on his head," drawled Madden. "He was in the pen for killing a couple of men in a railway hold-up, and escaped from jail out in Colorado. They've been hunting him for three months."

"Very polite of him to give you his card before he died," Braden remarked. "Through, Doc?"

Madden started to say something, and then decided to hold his tongue. He was sure that he was the only one present who had observed that Braden had known O'Geary. And since the pilot had entered the doctor's office, where Braden had been brought by Haslam, there had been something very peculiar in Braden's attitude. Several times Jerry had looked up to find those disturbing, slate eyes bent on him searchingly. There was something uncomfortably cold about Braden—as though he was some inhuman machine. And Madden knew that Braden, behind that harsh mask of his, was thinking many thoughts which would undoubtedly be surprizing.

And the lounging Texan, being nobody's fool, was certain that Braden was wondering, and perhaps worrying, about how much O'Geary had talked before he died. With every passing moment, entirely independent of the quick rush of events since Braden had come on the scene, Jerry was conscious of steadily growing interest, and liking for his inscrutable employer. Why Braden should go out of his way to do favors for an impecunious young pilot, Madden could not guess; but he did know that there was something in the man which called for respect. And certainly he was in the oil man's debt.

"Go home, and stay quiet for three or four days. I'll dress it twice a day for you, and then you'll be all O.K.," the doctor was saying. "Where do you live, Mr. Braden?"

"Nowhere," returned Braden. "Haven't had time—"

"I'll take him home with me," Madden interposed. "At the Knights', you know, Doc."

"All right—I'll call tomorrow about eleven," said the medico briskly. "Better carry him out, and then into the house, to avoid drawing the wound at all. Then be sure and stay quiet in bed. Good night."

Madden's decision had been a sudden one, but he was not sorry he had made the offer. He lived with a cousin of his mother's, Mrs. Knight, and her granddaughter, Helen. He had not recollected that they lived in Hadley until he had been there with his plane for a month, and old Mrs. Knight did not connect him with the family at all. After they got together, however, it proved a pleasant boarding place for Jerry, and the very old and very young woman who lived there seemed to be glad of the arrangement too.

As he explained the situation to Braden, while Haslam in the front seat drove as carefully as he could, Braden suddenly interrupted—

"If it's going to be at all embarrassing for you—"

"Not at all," protested Jerry. "They'll be tickled to death, under the circumstances, to do a favor for any friend of mine—"

"You don't mean to tell me that they're two people in Hadley who have stayed out of oil, do you? Seems funny to think of two women alone in this town."

"Oh no. Helen's mother owned a hundred acres, or so, right in the middle of the pool. Helen's worth considerable money—I don't know just how much."

"Jerry, what else did O'Geary say, outside of telling you who he was?"

That question, coming so suddenly, was like a blow. Madden, however, showed no signs of surprize as he answered equably—

"Said you were Streak Bird or Birdson or something."

Then there came into his mind a perverse thought, born of his consuming curiosity. He felt more or less conscience-stricken at making his helpless companion writhe, but he wanted to know just who Braden was. So he went on gently—

"He rambled on some more—just sort of raving, I guess."

He lighted a cigaret carelessly, and then glanced at Braden from the corner of his eyes. Under the shade of the Stetson it seemed that the man's eyes were living green flame. But he said nothing, and the silence was not a comfortable one.

Haslam eased the car up in front of a white frame house, standing back from a side-street in a pleasant expanse of lawn. And a lawn in Hadley was not a common thing. The old operator and Madden carried Braden into the house, tiptoed up the stairs, and deposited him in Jerry's bed. Talking in whispers and making very little noise, they helped him undress and get into a pair of Madden's pajamas.

"I'll be in the next room," whispered Jerry, pointing to the connecting door. "And I'll be up very early, and have the family primed for your acquaintance. Good night."

"Good night."

Taking Haslam to the door, Jerry stopped at the entrance to the room as he snapped off the light. Against the white pillow, Braden's dark face was an arresting sight—somehow an uncomfortable one. Then he smiled—the first real, whole-souled smile which Jerry had ever seen on his face. Even his eyes reflected it, and the Texan felt a sudden warmth in the man which had never been there before.

"See you tomorrow, Jerry," he whispered, and turned on his side as the light went out.

JERRY slept with one ear open, so to speak, in order to waylay Mrs. Knight as soon as that mountainous lady was stirring, which was usually very early. He corraled her in the kitchen at seven thirty, and told her the story.

Mrs. Knight, whom he called "Aunt Clara," was one of those pioneer women who followed their husbands to the frontier and handled a gun when necessary to assist their spouses. She weighed at least two hundred and fifty pounds; and thick gray hair, drawn tightly back, framed a fleshy, kindly face. It was significant that Jerry did not omit the poker game, the fight at the well, or any other details which might be expurgated for the average woman. As a matter of fact, Mrs. Knight would have had a certain contempt for any man, except the minister of the Methodist Church, who didn't play poker. And in the early days of Texas she had accounted for four Indians, herself.

"He's certainly done me more favors in twenty-four hours than I can ever pay back," Jerry finished up. "I knew you wouldn't mind—"

"Of course not!" Mrs. Knight assured him. "Now I'll get right busy and cook the poor man up somethin' nice an' tasty for his breakfast."

Shortly thereafter Helen came down. She was a slim, dark, bobbed-haired young woman of twenty, with snapping black eyes and a thrilled interest in life. Occasionally Mrs. Knight took her to San Antone or Houston for two weeks with relatives, and in those excursions Helen had been infected slightly with flapperitis. She used a little rouge and a little powder, and gloried in memories of dances and theatres and the attentions of immaculate young swains in dinner coats, although she despised the "lounge lizards," as she called them all, for any purpose other than escorting her. She was a fiery, impulsive, forthright young woman, who laughed easily and smiled almost always. Between Jerry and herself there was a brother-and-sister arrangement which was as close a bond as though it was really a blood relationship. They rode horseback together, Jerry took her up frequently for airplane rides and Helen's dislike for many of the city youths she met was usually concluded with the tagline—

"Why, Jerry could pick up six of those little roosters and juggle them!"

Later in the morning both Helen and Mrs. Knight were led into the room by Jerry, and Braden presented to them. In a bathrobe, with his thick brown hair sleekly parted, he looked a different sort of individual than on the night before. And during the next four days, during which he did not leave the house, he showed an entirely different side to his character.

He talked easily of many things, showing familiarity with city life as well as with the atmosphere of oil towns and ranches. Mexico he knew like a book, and Helen, particularly, spent hours talking with him. Jerry, occasionally, had little twinges of unrest as he saw how much Helen was with him, but they were of short duration. Particularly after Braden said to him one evening:

"Jerry, I'm sincere when I say that Helen's the rarest girl a homeless rover like me has ever had the privilege of meeting. She's like a dancing flame, somehow—she just warms these old bones and makes me talk away like a college boy! What havoc she's going to work some day when she steps out, eh?"

The young pilot's lips widened in his characteristic slow grin. Praise for Helen was always music to his ears.

"She's a nice girl—and a good sport," he said.

Meanwhile Junior No. 1 was progressing down into the earth at a rapid rate. The rock layer had finally been bored through, and now, with the crew working like demons and Greasy Hemingway straining his tools to the limit, the drill-stem was singing its way down without cessation. At fifteen hundred feet the formation was still holding up, and pay sand, if any, should be reached at 1,920 feet, or thereabouts.

Jerry took a few turns on the derrick floor himself, having little else to do. He couldn't fly the ship, because of his arrangement with Braden that no unnecessary chances be taken. And Squinty Conroy, immediately following the disastrous failure of his attempted coup, had left town hurriedly. The pleasure of interviewing him was thus denied Madden—and he missed it. Out in the main field the feverish activity went on, while miles of pipe line carried the oil to the loading racks and endless trains of squat, black oil-cars carried it away. Night by night the reckless life of Hadley increased its pace as bigger and bigger gushers came in northward, and day by day the trains dumped new mobs of men and women to swell the motley throng of the highest and the lowest strata of oilfield society. Three murders, several robberies, a hundred fights, thousands of acres changing hands—the dizzy whirl went on while Braden, resting quietly at home with the Knights, did not seem to have the slightest desire to join it.

It surprized Madden. He had thought that Braden would be fretting every moment. Instead of that, the oil man seemed to be enjoying himself thoroughly. And as the days went by Madden became more and more fond of him—and more and more mystified. Never did he penetrate beneath the shell which covered all that Braden had done, or felt, or was. He did not even mention oil, except a casual question or two about Junior No. 1. Jerry had no scruples about telling him, along with Helen and Mrs. Knight, that the formation was holding up, and that they expected to take a core before the week was out.

Then came the day when the doctor announced—

"Tomorrow, Mr. Braden, you can commence to be active again. Not too active, at first—but it's healed nicely."

Braden announced the news at dinner, and for the first time seemed restive. Jerry went downtown after the meal to consult with Hemingway. Returning, he cut across the lawn, instead of going to the walk, and walked silently across the grass toward the vine-clad porch.

Ten feet from the porch he stopped short, his big body as motionless as the house itself. Limned against the dim light shining from the window which gave on the porch he saw Braden and Helen, standing, their arms about each other. Through the thin leaves of the vines her white dress and Braden's dark coat were vaguely visible.

A thousand hot thoughts swarmed in his stunned brain. Had it been some callow youth he would not have been so shocked—but instinctively he revolted at the sight before him. Braden, thirty-five-year-old adventurer, unknown, a guest—and the girl—

Another element, which even Jerry himself did not realize at the moment, contributed to his metamorphosis. From an easy-going, devil-may-care, deliberate young Texan he was turned into a raging giant with red spots dancing before his eyes and a mad desire to wreak vengeance. In an instant all fondness for Braden was forgotten.

In two jumps he was at the steps. As his step on the porch floor reverberated from the roof, Helen and Braden separated.

"Get inside, Helen!" snapped Jerry, quivering in every muscle.

"Why, Jerry—" Braden started, but Madden cut in—

"Shut up, —— you!"

Helen had started to speak. She glanced fearfully at the tall, coolly poised oil man—but Jerry's influence was too strong. With a strangled little cry she ran inside. Mrs. Knight was not at home, Jerry knew.

"Come down off this porch," Madden said with slow ferocity.

"Don't be a fool!" snapped Braden. "You're making an ass of yourself—"

Jerry's blow, starting from the floor, lifted Braden clear of the floor and half across the side-railing. His body crashed through the vines, and tumbled the three feet to the ground. Madden, for the moment no more kin to his real self than he was to the Duke of York, bounded off the porch and around it toward Braden.

He stopped short as he saw the oil man's huddled body, motionless on the ground. For a moment Madden stood there, his barrel-like chest heaving, as he strove to get himself under control. Gradually he came to himself, and then stooped over the recumbent Braden. He still resented fiercely what he had seen, but he was aware of a certain shame at what he had done. From within he could hear Helen's frantic sobbing.

He was about to go inside for water when Braden suddenly sat up. He seemed to snap back to normal without effort, and when he spoke he showed no effects from the knockout.

"Well?" he queried sardonically.

"Braden, I'm sorry I hit you so quick and so hard, but, by ——, it's your turn to talk and you'd better think up something good!"

"Why?"

Jerry's fist clenched involuntarily.

"One more word like that out of you, and I'll finish the job I started. And you won't need any bed but a grave. Don't pull that superior stuff on me, Braden!"

There was an instant of tense silence. Then Braden got to his feet, and as his direct gaze found Jerry's flaming eyes he put his hand on the younger man's arm.

"Jerry, I don't blame you for what you did," he said quietly. "Let's forget it. You can go in and ask Helen, and she'll tell you that I've asked her to marry me."

This news, which possibly should have made Jerry feel better, made him feel worse. He could not account for the sudden sinking feeling within him.

"That's all very well, but I presume you think it's an honorable thing to come in here, and in three days sweep a girl off her feet—"

"I didn't do that, Jerry. She swept me off mine. And don't worry. We're going to talk to Mrs. Knight and you about it, and it'll be several months before we—"

He ceased talking abruptly, as though he did not want to finish. In the darkness his aquiline face was unreadable. There was something queerly impressive in it as the shadow softened its lean, bold outlines.

"BRADEN, what the —— do we know about you? Hardly your first name. And while you've been —— nice to me—in fact, not only played fair, but put me in your debt—I'm the only man around this house, and I'll be —— if I'm tickled at the idea of an utter stranger coming in here and carrying off Helen."

He said it slowly, as though groping for words. He wondered why he should feel so utterly heartsick—as though some light had gone out of life.

"Sit down, boy," Braden suggested, and there was something in his words which made him seem unutterably old and experienced. "I understand how you feel, and I don't blame you a bit. But I'm willing to come clean with you. Later, when I make my pile out of this town—which I'm going to do—I'll go further.

"Listen. I've been knocking around all over the world ever since I was in my teens. And I don't pretend to have been any model for the youth of the land. In fact, at times I've been mixed up in matters that I would hate to have any one know about.

"In the oil game—you know it—I've fought fire with fire. I've stepped out on my own two feet, and got what I was going after despite —— and high water. And I've been a tough, mean, straight-shooting hombre to cross.

"This isn't for publication, Madden. Out in a certain California field I've been known for three years as Streak Bird. The reason for the name, 'Streak', it isn't necessary to go into, and I called myself Bird because five years ago O'Geary tried to get me into a deal—he'd been my partner in Mexico and is a natural born crook—that I wouldn't throw in on. He did it—and when he got caught he tried to implicate me because he was so sore when I gave him the go-by and kicked him down three pairs of stairs. As I say, there's been no harder *hombre*, maybe, in the oilfields than I've been. Generally speaking, I've been a two-handed gunman, and a bad man to cross.

"But that's a thing of the past, Jerry. You know the oil game—how crooked it is often, and what things a man has to go through when he's up against bigger and richer men than himself. I've been a lone wolf, and I've howled in plenty of fields. The O'Geary thing taught me something, though—it was a narrow squeak—and I'm leaning over backward, now, to work open and above board. Been doing it for a couple of years now.

"And if there was anything needed to make me stick, it's been these few days here with your folks. I think the world of Helen, Jerry— And just being around a home like this, and seeing all the things I've missed, has taught me something. Jerry, I'm going to make a wad of money here, and then when I do, I'm going to marry Helen and get out of this business forever.

"Of course, I'm in your hands, more or less. You can kick a man when he's down, so to speak; and you've probably got it in your power to split Helen and me so far apart that we'd never see each other again. What do you say?"

Perhaps it was because the darkness softened Braden's face, plus the surprizing humility in his words, which affected Jerry; but for the first time he was aware of a distinct personal liking for Braden. His own mental condition helped, too—for he was numb and hopeless. It had burst upon him with stunning force—he was, and had been, in love with Helen without knowing it. It had taken a shock such as the night had brought forth to make him realize that his fondness for her was far from brotherly.

Being the kind of a man he was, this did not cause him to fight Braden's suit the more fiercely. In an effort to be utterly fair, and to forget himself, he was inclined all the more to be sympathetic with his new friend. So he said wearily—

"It's up to you two alone, I guess."

Then he turned his head abruptly and his gray eyes blazed suddenly into Braden's.

"I'm taking you at face value, Braden—you've been a wonderful friend of mine; and as far as I'm concerned you're a man, and to be taken as such. But God help you if Helen isn't in good hands!"

"You don't need to worry about that," Braden told him. "Ask her— Hello, this looks like Haslam's car! One thing more before he gets here. Have I your word of honor not to mention to a soul what I've told you? Thanks."

It was Haslam. They had been sitting in the grass, leaning against the house. They got to their feet, now, and Jerry said quickly—

"I'm going to run in the house a minute—I'll be right out."

He found Helen sobbing on her bed. She looked up as he came in, and then sat up. Her hair was disheveled, and somehow her oval face, with its tear-drenched eyes and quivering lips seemed more beautiful and girlish than ever before.

Jerry took her by the shoulders.

"I'm sorry for what I did, Sugar," he said gently. "I didn't quite understand—"

She threw her arms around him and smiled radiantly.

"I—I knew you'd be glad, Jerry," she told him. "It seems as though I'd been waiting all my life to feel like this!"

"That's great!" returned Madden, and his deliberate grin was an achievement. "Now I've got to run along and see Haslam—he's downstairs."

He went out on the porch, and the retired oil operator greeted him with—

"Hi, Jerry. Saw the Doc and he said Braden, here, was gonna be up an' around tuhmorruh. Personally, I crave revenge at poker, an' I was tryin' to organize a little game around tuh my house tuhmorruh night. How about it?"

"Suits me," drawled Jerry.

"And me," stated Braden.

He was himself again—there was no trace of the attitude toward Jerry which had been his a few minutes before.

The night was very warm, and as Haslam lifted his hand to wipe the perspiration from his extensive brow Braden remarked—

"Don't wear the ring at night, eh?"

"Think I'm crazy?" snorted Haslam. "With hijackers runnin' around this town like cockroaches in an army sink?"

"That sparkler is the pride and joy of his life," chuckled Jerry. "He enthrones it in a little tin box every time the sun goes down, along with a lot of other similar ornaments."

"Good idea," observed Braden. "By the way, Mr. Haslam, Jerry says that there's no way on earth you can be dragged into an oil deal."

"He said a whole mouthful," Haslam assured him. "Any oil deal is a gamble, and I've seen too many men get their roll and then drop it, tryin' tuh give Rockefeller competition. I got all I want, and if I could git a bundle o' Standard Oil stock by paying the postage on it, I wouldn't take it."

"Too bad," said Braden absently. "I've got a deal in mind—"

Jerry tore his thoughts from the subject which it seemed he could not put out of his mind, and asked:

"By the way, Braden, let's have a showdown, if you don't mind. You came in here and hired the exclusive use of my airplane, you did the Junior No. 1 Company a tremendous favor right after that, and, in general, you've said and acted like you wanted to tie up someway with us. Just what's the lay?"

"Jerry, I like you all right—in fact, fine—but I wasn't doing any of the things I did for the good of your private soul or as an outlet for my affection," Braden assured him sardonically.

He was the Braden of old, now—cool, saturnine, mocking; with his deep voice talking evenly and his tall, slender body at ease. "You folks are putting down a wildcat. I knew by the way you acted, and you told me more right here at the house, that your formation is looking all right, and that there's a chance you'll strike oil. If you do, that acreage around there is going to be worth a fortune.

"Now I'm like Squinty Conroy. I like to know, in a general way, where I stand. I know you boys haven't got a nickel's worth of capital to buy up more acreage. All your cash is sunk in that tract you've got now, and that rig, and the drilling. So why shouldn't I be the man to get in on the ground floor; get all the information there is from you boys, and then at the last minute, when you take a core and she looks good, step out with some capital I'll get interested, and buy up everything in sight?

"I've done something for you. I've tried to get myself in your good graces, and show myself a square-shooter. Of course, I know you fellows, if the core looks good when you take a sample down at the sand, can step out and get capital to back you. But it seems to me I deserve a slice, don't I? If it hadn't 've been for me, Squinty Conroy would have it all right now. Personally, I don't want to buy in now—too much of a chance. If the core looks good, I'll take a chance."

"What's your proposition?" inquired Madden.

He was an oil man now—every inch of him—alert as a cat at a rat hole.

"I'll organize a corporation, or at least raise capital enough to swing a big piece of acreage. In return for inside information from you folks—I'll buy up all I can—you'll have an eighth share in all profits, I'll get an eighth share from the capitalists I interest, because I get the information, and the actual money men will have the rest, free and clear. Your company gets an eighth interest in all profits for furnishing information."

"That ain't bad," opined Haslam.

"Another thing," Braden went on incisively, as though every word was driving a wedge farther and farther into any objections Jerry might have. "All the acreage offset from Junior No. 1, after being bought and sold a lot, is held at around thirty dollars, except one piece of a thousand acres, with a two hundred-foot front on your thirty-acre tract. I refer to the Gary land."

"That's right."

"I know that Gary, in Houston, is holding that land at sixty dollars an acre, right now; being a crazy old miser, who always wants twice as much as anything he owns is worth. It isn't worth thirty now—after the well comes in it'll be worth plenty, and if it doesn't come in it won't be worth a nickel. As soon as one piece of acreage changes hands, the market'll be up in G. Everybody'll know you've taken a core, and if one piece of land sells every lease-hound in Hadley'll be in full cry. They'll figure the truth—that the core looks good. That means, we've got to work fast and furious.

"Now it's all right to gamble on a little acreage at thirty, but paying sixty thousand dollars for a thousand acres is too much, on the strength of a core. On the other hand, if the well comes in it'll be a great buy. And not such a bad price for it, either, from Gary's end, because a thousand acres is a lot of land, and the extreme end of that tract is a long, long way from Junior No. 1, and there'd be no guarantee of oil. What I want to do is snap up all the thirty-dollar acreage on the strength of a good core, then bring the well in at night; and if she comes in, hop that airplane and buy the other acreage from Gary before anybody knows we've got a flowing well."

"Where you gonna get all this capital?" queried Haslam.

"Leave that to me," rejoined Braden. "Well, Jerry, think you boys would like to work along with me?"

"We'll see. It's not for me to decide," drawled Jerry. "Is that all you wanted my plane for?"

"No. I never can tell what'll come up—and when I'll want to get somewhere faster than anybody else. As I told you—when I operate, I operate."

Haslam arose.

"Yuh got a good idea," he opined. "If yuh can git all that capital behind yuh, or've got it yoreself, it'd be a good thing all around. Yuh got a wide acquaintance in the fields, Mr. Braden?"

"Fairly. And I'm more of a business man, maybe, than a straight-out, technical oil man."

"Well, I'm sorry, gents; but me bein' a old man, I ain't interested in these here gamblin' things. So I'll expect yuh both up tuh my place, with Krooz, tumorruh night. I don't s'pose I can git another ride until all this stuff is done, can I, Jerry?"

"Ask Braden," suggested Madden.

"Go ahead," Braden told him. "I'm going up, myself, early in the morning. Being a fanatic on the subject of flying myself, I appreciate your liking for it. Let's all go out at seven-thirty, eh? I've got a lot of work to do."

"Thanks," Haslam said happily. "That's nice o' yuh, Braden. I'll pick yuh up in my car, right here. Good night, *caballeros*."

"Where does Haslam live?" Braden asked casually, after the chubby visitor had left.

"He's got four rooms in a private house, a few blocks over. Why?"

"Just wondered. Seems peculiar a man of money should live here, when it isn't his home town. I suppose he can't get the smell of oil and gas out of his system."

Helen came out on the porch, and he stopped speaking as he arose to greet her. Jerry got up too.

"I think I'll turn in," he said slowly. "I was up pretty early this morning, and I need sleep."

V

AFTER he had given Haslam a brief ride the next morning, he took Braden up. The latter looked like a Mephistopheles of the air, in close-fitting helmet and huge goggles. He wanted some instruction in flying, and Jerry soon perceived that his passenger had not exaggerated the truth when he had said that he had taken a few lessons in California. In fact, Braden flew very well as far as airmanship was concerned. He did not overcontrol, which is the invariable fault of the amateur. Every puff of wind causes them to slam the stick around. The infinitely delicate stick work, necessary in flying—an eighth of an inch means a great deal—was not within Braden's power as yet, but he did manage to keep the ship level, and also accomplished some creditable banks.

When they got down to the ground again, Braden asked—

"About how many hours does it take for a man to learn to land, under normal conditions?"

"From four to eight," Madden told him. "Want to learn that, too? You don't do half badly in the air."

"We'll start tomorrow," stated Braden. "Now, I've got to get busy."

He and Haslam made off for town, while Jerry stayed with the ship and went over it thoroughly. He tinkered with the engine, wiped off the shining sides, and thought a great deal. In the cold morning light he was not in the mood of the evening before—and the hypnosis which seemed to affect every one when Braden was around was likewise lacking. He strove to put any jealousy out of his mind—but the pain within him would not cease.

"Maybe it's that," he told himself candidly, as he methodically wiped away on the ship. "But Braden's got to come clean before I give up the idea of throwing a wrench in the machinery! I wonder if I could, at that."

He finished at noon, and was at the house when Braden came down the comparatively quiet side street, accompanied by a stocky, broad-shouldered man with a dark, pock-marked face. Jerry, lounging on the porch and reading a popular mechanical magazine, recognized Braden's companion as Beardsley, driller of the Lucky Strike wildcat well. The Lucky Strike was the only simon pure wildcat—that is, being drilled in unproved territory—around Hadley, except Junior No. 1. It was located southeast of town, about five miles from the Junior well.

"Thought I'd find you here," said Braden directly. "Meet Mr. Beardsley, chief driller on the Lucky Strike."

"Glad to know you," said Madden, gazing into the muddy black eyes of the driller. "What's the uproar?" he continued gently.

"Beardsley's an old friend of mine," Braden said tersely. "He's got a gold mine of a proposition, and I want to let you in on it. All in the family, you know."

The words were enough to reopen the wound—but the smile accompanying them—that one-sided, thin-lipped, unutterably mocking smile—made them worse. Jerry, cursing himself for a jealous, two-for-a-cent dog in the manger, kept his peace, and waited for whatever might come forth.

"Here's the proposition," Braden told him, his narrow eyes gazing straight into Jerry's. "The Lucky Strike took a core last night."

"Huh?" grunted Jerry in surprize. "Thought you were only down to about fifteen hundred."

"That's what we put out tuh the public," grinned Beardsley, showing two missing teeth.

"And here's a sample of it," continued Braden. "Show it to him, Lou."

Beardsley fished from his pocket a small chunk of sand. A core is simply a sample of the pay sand. When a well is drilled to the depth where geological charts show that the sand should be, it is the custom to let down a hollow iron tube, and take a sample of the sand. If it shows any oil content, the driller feels his way down, so to speak, being careful not to go too far. For if that happens, salt water is found, the well is flooded—and ruined. The deeper one can get into the sand, without going through, the greater the flow of the well, if there is oil there.

Jerry took the precious piece of sand, caked into a hard mass, and smelled of it. It smelled of oil, and it was sand. A sand formation means a much more reliable and long-flowing well than a lime construction. A core with oil in it is not an infallible indication that there is oil enough to make a paying well, but it comes as near being a surety as anything in the business, save only a well that is actually flowing.

Jerry, outwardly placid but inwardly wildly excited, examined it closely. It meant that chances for Junior No. 1 being a flowing well were much increased. The territory south of town, despite the geologists, had oil in it somewhere!

"Now listen, Jerry. I need help, and I'm letting you in on it in preference to anybody else," Braden went on. "The Lucky Strike Company was financed by thirty-five thousand dollars' worth of stock, sold to a lot of investors. There's one man in it, holding eight hundred dollars' worth of stock, who's willing to sell his share right now, for eight thousand. He wants to do this because he's got no other money, and he's dug up one lease-holder, with fifty acres offset from the Lucky Strike acreage, who's willing to sell at a reasonable price. This stockholder—Sykes—hasn't got any money, and he wants this eight thousand to get this other acreage; figuring he can make more money that way than his share in the Lucky Strike would bring him, see? And nobody but him knows who this one lease-holder who's willing to sell within reason is. He told Beardsley about it, and Lou told me.

"Here's the fix I'm in. I haven't got my capital behind me yet—I'm going to Houston, soon, to get it—but this well is going to come in within twenty-four hours. And with this deal coming up on the Junior well, I can't afford to sink too much in one wad. I don't like to have all my eggs in one basket. You know the oil game—this Lucky Strike is almost sure, but not quite. What do you say to this? I'll buy these eight shares of Sykes for eight thousand dollars. I'll give you half—four shares. In return for that, you give me, say, two-thirds of the profits, if any, you make out of your three-thousand-dollar share in Junior No. 1. We both cut Beardsley in for one per cent. of any profits we make out of the Lucky Strike stock, because he gave the information.

"One more thing. If the Lucky Strike proves up and makes money, you pay me back the four thousand—and you get your share of the Junior well back again, free and clear. I don't want to make money on you. But if, by any chance, the Lucky Strike shouldn't come in, I can't afford to have sunk eight thousand dollars in it with nothing to show for it. Acreage one can turn over—but not shares in a dry well."

Jerry got up and paced the length of the veranda with long, easy strides. Then he looked down into the unfathomable eyes below him.

"Why are you making such a ridiculously generous proposition to me?" he asked slowly.

"A variety of reasons. First of all, it isn't as generous as you may think at first glance. Second, you've done me two of the greatest favors one man can do another. You killed O'Geary for me. I'd have done it if I'd had the chance to—privately—Because as long as he was at large, my life was in danger. I'll never forget you leaping in and risking your life to get him. Secondly—Helen. You know what I mean. I want to make some money for you, Jerry. And you and I are going to land on top of the heap—wait and see!"

Thus it was that an hour later certain papers were drawn up in the office of Lawyer Thomson. By these indentures, presents and agreements, eight shares of Lucky Strike stock were transferred to Donald M. Braden and Gerald Madden from the custody of Mr. Lawrence Sykes. By further contracts, two-thirds of all profits accruing to Mr. Gerald Madden in any manner whatsoever from one share of Junior No. 1 stock, valued at three thousand dollars—there being only ten shares—was to be the property of Mr. Donald M. Braden; providing that in the interim Mr. Gerald Madden should not have repaid, out of the profits of Lucky Strike, four thousand dollars in cash. In the latter contingency, all contracts relating to Junior No. 1 were to become null and void.

Whereupon Mr. Braden presented the bow-legged, leathery-faced Mr. Sykes with eight thousand dollars in the form of a certified check, and the deal was made.

Strangely enough, when Jerry announced his intention to visit the Lucky Strike well, accompanying Mr. Lou Beardsley, Braden vetoed the suggestion. He craved some more airplane lessons, it appeared, and consequently, for two long hours the *Jenny* droned around and around the field, and landed on every round. Braden did quite respectably the last few times, succeeding in leveling off less than ten feet above the ground, and once he even got the ship down on three points. By that time it was nearly dark—time for supper, and the visit to the well was postponed.

VI

AT SUPPER that night, Jerry told Mrs. Knight and Helen about what Braden had done, which further increased the value of that gentleman's personal stock. It was plain to Jerry that Helen was so thoroughly under the spell of the lean-faced adventurer, that she had neither thoughts, dreams nor interests aside from him. And Braden seemed to throw off his mantle of harsh cynicism when he was in her presence. He became a man—and a charming one—instead of an impersonal, curiously fascinating machine.

Later on, at Haslam's apartment, Braden expressed a desire to see the layout, after getting one glimpse at the much over-furnished living-room. Haslam, as bachelors always are, was proud to show his four shrieking rooms. They were decorated as loudly as his person was.

The four men had been playing stud-poker for perhaps two hours, and it was shortly after ten, when Braden expressed a desire to lie down for a few minutes.

"Lying around the way I've been doing for the last few days has turned me into a —— cripple," he explained. "Give me a half-hour layoff, and I'll be right as a tick."

"Sure. Go right on in. Wait a minute. I'll light the light fur yuh—"

"No—don't bother," Braden interposed quickly. "I know where it is—right beside the door. Go ahead with the game."

Which they did. They heard him walk through the intervening two rooms—what Haslam fondly believed was a "den," and a spare bedroom—and then his voice could be heard shouting—

"That's certainly a marvelous rug here, Haslam. I didn't notice it before."

He was referring to an oriental in the den, and the proud Haslam returned—

"Cost me an even thousand. I should hope tuh tell yuh it's good! Raise yuh ten—no, twenty, by ——!"

"That let's me out," stated Jerry. "I—"

A deafening report rang through the house. Powder smoke rolled in from the other room.

As Jerry got in motion, the first of the stunned trio to recover, there came another report. He plunged through the two intervening rooms, expecting he scarcely knew what.

It was almost an anti-climax when he reached the door of the bedroom, closely followed by the pop-eyed pair behind him. Braden, his mocking face registering disgust, was standing at the window, gun in hand, peering out. Attached to the tail of the bed, and leading out of the window, there was the beginnings of a rope ladder.

"No time to lose," snapped Braden. "Saw the ladder when I snapped on the light, looked out, and saw a fellow beating it over the fence. Shot—didn't do any good, I don't think. Better notify the police. I'll go out and see whether I winged him—"

Haslam took one look at an open dresser drawer.

"They've got the box, —— 'em!" he wailed.

Krooz was already in the sitting-room, and Jerry could hear him saying—

"The jail—quick, operator!"

When they got outside, they found a crowd had gathered, mostly roughnecks who had been coming from their boarding-places toward the evening's diversions in town. The bedroom window, however, faced a board fence at the rear of the house, on the other side of which was a narrow dirt road. Consequently, no one had seen anything, and there was no sign of the burglar, or news of him.

Haslam had had jewels valued at twelve thousand dollars in the box, and his anguish over the loss of his trinkets was piteous to behold. He was as naïve in his liking for such ornamental things as a child over a new dress. The rotund little oil man was incapable of playing any more poker, and as he mooned around the house he seemed as much like the cool, keen, hard-fisted veteran of the oil-fields that he was as Madden seemed like a chorus man. Haslam was deceptive in every way, but he was sincere as he mourned his lost treasures.

The projected poker party broke up then and there, and when the three men reached the corner of the street on which the Knight home was located Braden said—

"Think I'll run downtown with Krooz and see a couple of people. Going home, Jerry?"

The blazing lights of Main Street were glaringly evident, and from its thronged sidewalks there came a low, incessant hum. It was like some gigantic beast purring—and calling. Somehow, though, Jerry wanted to be alone. For once, he had no stomach for the swirling life down there. He was much mixed up in his mind. There were vague doubts and wonderings—and always that incessant sense of something lost—

"No, I think I'll go home and read a while," he decided, and said good night.

He found Helen on the porch, with Mrs. Knight. He told them all that had happened, to the accompaniment of many "I declares!" from Mrs. Knight, and tense ejaculations of interest from Helen.

Meanwhile, downtown, Braden held two interviews. One of them was with a certain tall, voluptuously constructed, stunning young woman, in the Hadley hotel, whose face was as beautiful and artificial as one might want to see, and whose eyes, big and black below smoothly shining black hair, were very hard and very bright. This chat resulted in the departure of Miss Gloria Kennedy on the night train for Houston.

The other interview was in the office of Mr. Clem Allen, a lawyer who had come so close to being disbarred in the sovereign state of Massachusetts on a charge of tampering with a jury that he had decided to come south. He had silver white hair above a lined, square face, was forty years old, lived with his mother and was an ideal son; and was likewise, without question, the smartest, crookedest lawyer in the mid-continent fields. He had been a leading criminal lawyer, and now he was an equally adroit man on oil leases and royalty contracts, and similar things. He could draw a contract with more holes in it than a sieve —and as invisible to the average eye as a speck of dust would be on the left eyebrow of the Statue of Liberty.

At about the time he was finishing this social conference, Mr. Ezekial Haslam was on the phone, talking to Jerry Madden.

"I called up the chief for news, and I'll be a cross-cut, glass-eyed, gumbo-footed cross between a sky-pilot and a —— fool if he didn't swear up and down there hadn't any report whatever been made to 'im! And we both heard Krooz tellin' 'em. Ain't it the limit?"

Not only the limit, reflected Jerry as he hung up. His mind was churning about, trying to break through some obstacle which impeded its action. Always, he was tantalizingly close to clarifying his ideas—but always the explanation which would clear up everything eluded him.

He listened absently to Helen's catalog of the virtues of "Don."

"He's wonderful, Jerry," she said raptly. "Do you know what he said? That he wouldn't marry me until he had a hundred thousand dollars, more than I've got. And he asked me about where my money was invested, and said he was going to talk to you about putting it into seven per cent., first mortgage bonds or something—says you can get that in the South or something—I didn't understand—and he won't touch a nickel of it. We're going to Europe on our honeymoon—"

At this point Braden, himself came swinging down the street, with his long, springy stride, and turned in to the house. He kissed Helen, patted her shoulder, and then said to Jerry—

"We leave for Houston, Jerry, early in the morning. All right?"

"Sure."

"Heard from the well today?"

"Not a thing. But I guess they're going down all right. How about the Lucky Strike?"

"Nothing yet. Well, I'm going to get my capital lined up in Houston—what Krooz won't put in—and then I'll be ready to operate. Then we can go to Hemingway and the rest of your crew and put something definite in front of 'em."

He talked for a while, interestingly as always, and then everybody went to bed to prepare for early rising in the morning. Once again Jerry's ordinarily nerveless body refused to rest. Braden, Helen, Helen and Braden—every affectionate gesture between them—

The mind and heart of the flyer were in a far from tranquil condition. And yet, as he reminded himself a thousand times, it might be because he was so hopelessly in love with Helen, and that he was not a fair and unprejudiced judge—

And furthermore, if there were any grounds for distrusting the man who had done everything he could for Madden, what could he be up to?

Possibly he could have got an inkling next day in Houston, had he been a little fly on the wall of a certain shady little hotel there. But instead of that, Jerry was fraternizing with Lieutenant Billy Young, at Ellsworth Field, which is an army aviation field a few miles from Houston. Braden and Jerry landed there, and there Jerry stayed on the field while Braden went to Houston. In Houston he met the stunning young woman with whom he had talked in Hadley, then there was some business done in a jewelry store, and further transactions elsewhere which, to the casual eye, would seem to have nothing to do with raising a large amount of money.

To the casual eye, that is. As a matter of fact, that is just what the aim of the whole day's work was. Braden did not get his money in ordinary ways.

VII

THE lights of Hadley were commencing to wink through the swiftly falling twilight, as the ship circled around the landing field back in the boom town. And from hundreds of derricks tiny globes of light looked like swarming fireflies. Braden had flown both ways, and his attempted landing at Ellsworth Field had been fairly good. Now, however, due to the additional hazard of the half darkness, Jerry took the stick and set the *Jenny* down smoothly.

They had to walk back to town—or thought they did. But half way there, Mr. Ezekiel Haslam met them in his car.

"Heard yore plane, and thought yuh might need a lift," he explained. "Good trip?"

Jerry nodded.

"Heard anything new about the jewelry?" he inquired.

"Not a thing. That's —— funny, yuh know. Did yuh hear about it, Braden? Yore friend Krooz never got the police station at all. He swears up an' down he got somebody, and just belched out the yarn quick and hung up."

"Central must have misfired," Braden returned.

"By the way, Jerry, did yuh hear about the Lucky Strike?" pursued Haslam. "I hope yore well turns out better. They got a absolutely dry hole. Nothin' but gas."

Jerry did not answer. It was a stunning disappointment—and suddenly his sense of disquiet returned ten-fold.

"Well I'll be ——!" said Braden slowly. "Jerry — I'm sorry. I wonder if that Beardsley put up a game on me? If he did, by —— I'll present him with a wooden kimono he'll be wearing from here to —— just as sure as I'm in Hadley this minute!"

There was a depth of concentrated venom in his words, which seemed to drop from his mouth like clinking pieces of ice, that chilled the easy-going Texan at his side.

"It's always a tossup in this business," he drawled, and then explained the whole deal to Haslam.

Something in his recounting of it must have hit home with Braden. And when Haslam, driving along slowly, gave vent to a couple of significant "hums," Braden asserted himself. He had been sitting quietly in the back seat, listening. Now he broke into speech.

"Jerry—and you too, Haslam—I'll have something to say to you both in just about a minute," he said in his usual cool, precise tones. "Just as soon as we get out of this car."

The equable Madden was conscious of a sense of expectancy which he could not quite fathom. Braden was always full of surprizes—

"We'll stop now," said Haslam coolly. "Shoot yore wad, Braden."

"It's just this. I lay my cards on the table, and I don't give a —— whether anybody likes it or not. And I can row my boat without any help. I came into this town, sized up the situation, laid out a plan of operation, and started to work. I met you two. I liked you. I've done everything in the world to shoot square.

"However, I've noticed that Madden, here, has been acting —— peculiarly, and that goes for you, Haslam, too, ever since the minute when I tried to shoot the bird that was robbing you. There's nothing I can do about that, I guess. Think what you please and be —— to you!

"But as for you, Jerry, I gather from your recent remarks and the queer clucking noises emitted by Haslam, here, that you think you were swindled out of your share in the Junior No. 1. Well, I'm sick and tired of dealing with a muling and puking kid—"

"Braden, shut your mouth on those little pet names," Madden said quietly.

"I'm accustomed to regulating my own mouth," snapped Braden.

Jerry climbed out of the car deliberately, and Braden followed him.

"Now you listen, both of you, and you especially, Madden," Braden said, his level eyes gleaming coldly into the flyer's. "I'm sick and tired of this. I've tried to take care of you—guarding you like a child in everything from poker up. I was making a living around oil fields when you weren't dry behind the ears yet, and if you think Donald Braden is going to take anything from you or anybody like you, or stand for any of these veiled insults that you've been passing out—"

His coldly ferocious speech, backed by that harsh face, stopped on that word, as though daring a reply. And he got one. Haslam, ready for trouble, got out of the car.

"This is where you listen," Jerry said slowly. "Strikes me you're getting —— sensitive all of a sudden. You brought up this jewel robbery thing. If you're such a —— experienced man, it seems to me you've got a —— thin skin. Who the —— ever rung you in on that? Furthermore, if they did ring you in on it, providing they were suspicious, who could blame 'em?"

There was a moment of taut silence, and then Braden's arm, which Jerry had been watching like a hawk, dropped to his side.

"I'll be —— if I ever thought a man could say that and live," the oil man said, a certain deadliness in his unemotional voice. "Helen Knight saved your life this minute."

"Oh, no, she didn't," Jerry told him.

The Texan was in a whirl, as he plunged on, scarcely knowing why he was forcing this showdown.

"I know that draw of yours, from your shoulder holster.

"Now here, Braden. There's no use of us fighting. Look at the facts. And bear in mind that we're paying you a tribute when we don't even think of suspecting you. As for that robbery—if we wanted to, couldn't we figure that you carried that ladder in under your shirt, and when you went in the room strung it out the window for a blind? Then threw that box out the window to a waiting accomplice, and shot in the air and pretended you'd caught a man in Haslam's room?

"What do we know about you? Nothing, except that you've acted like a square-shooter and done me a lot of favors. And that's enough for me. I will say this—as far as I'm concerned, who or what you are doesn't mean three hoots in ——. But I think more of Helen Knight than I do of any other living human, and before that marriage finally comes off you are going to come clean with me. Maybe that's been on my mind too much. But—"

"I'm satisfied to quit doing business with you," Braden interrupted, and there was a weary note in his voice, as though he had reached the limit of his powers. "As soon as we get back to town I'll give you back your contract, even though it was open and above-board—"

"You'll do nothing of the kind!" Jerry told him, his eyes blazing suddenly at the insinuation. "Where do you get that stuff?"

"Say, are you goin' cuckoo?" put in Haslam.

There was a pause as a car passed them. A quarter of a mile ahead, Hadley was getting into the swing of the evening, its lights blazing against the sky.

Then Braden spoke, and in his manner and voice it seemed that he was, for the moment, anything but the hard-boiled adventurer.

"I can see your point, at that, big boy," he remarked, gazing absently into the distance. "I've told you, Jerry, some things about myself. I'm getting to be as bad as a soft-headed woman since I've met Helen. Anyway, maybe that's responsible for the fact that a thing like that Lucky Strike deal cuts me more than the average person. Because, gentlemen, I'll tell you that there was a time when I worked some strong stuff. But lately, and especially with you fellows, I've shot as straight as I knew how, for my own benefit as well as yours."

"Of course," Haslam told him kindly, as he started the car. "And don't be so —— sensitive. Nobody's blamin' you for nothin'. A man that can't drop some money down a dry hole in this game had better go intuh the oil business in a service station or a grocery store."

"That goes for me, too," Jerry told him. "We'll mosey around and see whether Beardsley deliberately hornswoggled you, eh?"

"Sure," Braden agreed. "But first let's get this deal with your Junior No. 1 crowd fixed up, eh?"

JERRY agreed, and as soon as they had had supper, which they ate hurriedly in a crowded and fly-specked restaurant, they set forth to find Hemingway. When they found that melancholy and bemustached driller at his palatial quarters in a tent on a side street, he drew Jerry aside and announced that they should be ready to take a core in less than a week.

"And she don't look so bad. Formation holdin' true to form, and she's gassin' already. Hear about the Lucky Strike?

One o' the roughnecks on it come around fur a job tuhday, an' he told me they was crazy tuh keep drillin' on her anyway. The formation never was right—all wrong, in fact. But the owners was crazy, and Beardsley, who's as crooked a *hombre* as ever drilled a dry hole, or dropped a tool down a good one, kind o' egged 'em on tuh continue so's he could keep workin'."

Which gave Jerry something to think about. Back there on the road, the cool, sardonic Braden had softened, it had seemed, for the second time since Jerry had known him. And when he did, possibly because the contrast was so great, there was something sincere and winning about the man. And yet, always it seemed that something occurred to keep Jerry from giving the oil man his entire confidence.

With a deliberate effort of will he forced the problem which was becoming an obsession with him—an obsession because of Helen—from his mind and said to Hemingway:

"Greasy, Mr. Braden has an offer to make us. He's raised capital enough—seventy-five thousand dollars—to swing a tract of around fifteen hundred acres of land surrounding our well, at the prevailing prices. His offer to us is this: In return for detailed information about the well, he'll invest this money, and his backers have consented to give us one-eighth of the net profits from all this land, in return for our giving Braden, as their representative, full information so that they can know whether to go ahead or not. Braden's idea is to wait until we take a core and then, if it shows oil, to tie up this acreage before we bring the well in."

"Willin' tuh put that in black an' white, Mr. Braden?" queried Hemingway.

"Absolutely."

"Of course, Greasy, you know that Mr. Braden practically saved our bacon for us by tipping us off to Squinty Conroy, and I'm bound to say that he deserves a chance—and I think it'll be for our benefit, too."

Braden, his bold face set in lines more saturnine than usual, broke in here to say with underlying mockery—

"And of course I'm a share-holder, too, and as a matter of fact have a right to know everything about the well. But that doesn't mean much in this man's country, if you fellows wanted to keep me out of vicinity of the well. In addition to that, I want to do the fair thing. It'll be a legal contract, but more than that, it'll be an arrangement between friends."

"You're an owner!" exclaimed Hemingway in amazement.

Jerry sketched the story of the exchange he had made with Braden. Hemingway listened, pulling his mustache pensively. His eyes were suddenly very bright, and they rested persistently on Braden's composed countenance.

"I guess Beardsley just fooled us," Jerry concluded.

"If you were a friend o' his, and didn't know he was crooked as a rat, yo're a —— poor oil man and a —— poor judge o' human nature!" Hemingway said suddenly, looking straight at Braden. "And you were keepin' —— bad company, Mr. Braden."

Jerry involuntarily flexed his muscles. He would not have been surprized to see one of those lightning draws of Braden's—

But, as always, Braden came to the bat and knocked all suspicion out of the window.

"As a matter of fact," he said calmly, "I knew, of course, that Beardsley was as crooked as a corkscrew. He's an old friend—or rather acquaintance—of mine, and his crookedness was what I figured on! I thought that the well looked great, but that Beardsley had fooled the owners, or at least this one man, Sykes, into thinking it wasn't anywhere near as good as it looked to Beardsley, and thus persuaded him to sell at a low price for Beardsley's benefit."

"He's been known to do that," Hemingway admitted, and it seemed as though the stubby driller had relaxed. "You figured he wasn't honest—but you didn't figure him as crooked as he was. Well, let's get down to brass tacks."

Which they did, continuing in the morning out at the well. And that afternoon papers were signed setting forth the details of the arrangement agreed upon, which was exactly as had been outlined to Hemingway. The prospect of sharing in the profits on fifteen hundred acres of land seemed to lend a new impetus to the work, and for twelve hours a day the crew toiled like demons as the drill bit ever deeper into the earth, and the pay-sand came closer and closer.

The next three days were spent in a state of gradually growing excitement as the climax drew closer. Braden did little but get a list of the owners of acreage surrounding the well, take flying lessons from Jerry for two hours a day, and go riding or walking or movieing with Helen.

The engaged pair seemed to be as happy as it is given any one on earth to be; as happy as Jerry was miserable. Helen's attitude increased his sense of desolation, for it was more affectionate, it seemed, than ever. It appeared that her engagement had drawn her closer to Jerry. She confided everything to him. Sometimes Jerry thought she divined his feelings, and was trying to alleviate his pain.

As he saw her drawn more and more closely under the spell of Braden's curiously fascinating personality, Jerry, in his deliberate way, became more and more determined on one thing. Before Braden married Helen, regardless of how much money he had, the oil man would have to tell Jerry many things about himself. Helen was not going to be carried off by an unknown soldier of fortune, and there were annoying things, such as the words which the dying convict had gasped through blood-frothed lips, which needed more explanation than Braden had given. That is, if he was to marry Helen.

Finally, the morning came when a core was to be taken. To the many men, ranging from well-scouts to humble lease-hounds, who had inquired about the progress of the well the answer had always been that they were having trouble, and were only down to twelve hundred feet. Not a soul had talked, and consequently, when Braden, Haslam, and Jerry arrived at the well, there were no visitors to keep off.

The crew was working like mad, and Jerry pitched in and helped. Length after length of drill-stem came out of the hole. As each joint came clear of the floor, the roughnecks leaped into action. With huge chain-wrenches they disconnected the free section, a great traveling block swung from the top of the derrick, seized the free length, and swung it to one side. The derrick man, high up on a platform in the derrick, helped the men on the floor to pile the pipe vertically on one side.

Finally, nineteen hundred feet of pipe was out of the hole, and on the bottom of the last length they attached the hollow pipe, equipped with an automatic device which would close the lower end when it was full of the sand, which would bring up the all-important sample of soil.

Then the work commenced again, and this time fourble after fourble was jointed on, as the core-taker went further and further down in the hole. It was dark, and there was two hundred feet of drill-stem down in the hole, when there came a clanking noise.

Hemingway, who had been like a silent ghost at the feast as he handled his engine, cursed with fluency and abandon.

"Through fur the night," he stated. "Got tuh git a new belt rod."

It was arranged that every roughneck should stand guard. There was to be one man on the road, a mile from the well, to keep out any inquisitive spectators. No use of overlooking any precautions to keep eager lease-hounds from snapping up acreage merely on the strength of the fact that a core was being taken.

Back at the house there was a good supper waiting, and afterward Braden and Helen wandered off for a walk. It was ten o'clock when they returned, and then Braden announced that he was going down town.

"I'm going to start Clem Allen at work rounding up those leases," he said. "He won't tell who he's operating for. Get all the owners tuh sell for around thirty, and have the papers drawn up. Then if she goes flooey, Clem 'll just say his principal backed out and don't want to buy."

This was a needful precaution, for the land, with the exception of the one thousand acre tract which was held by one man in Houston, was in small parcels, and there were at least fifteen owners of the five or six hundred acres offsetting the small tract on which the well was going down.

After Braden had wandered off, Helen perched herself on the arm of Jerry's chair. The porch was in deep shadow, and her face was blurred in the darkness. She put her arm over the young pilot's shoulder.

"You haven't seemed like yourself lately, Jerry," she said.

"I'm right as can be!" he drawled easily. "How about yourself? Getting happier every day, I suppose."

To his surprize, she did not answer immediately. Then she said hesitantly—

"Oh I am, Jerry, but sometimes—Don's so sort of—reserved, sometimes. I love him, I know, but sometimes when he looks at me I think that I really don't know him at all—"

Jerry's heart gave a mighty bound, for which he hated himself. He took her hand gently, and said with more than his usual deliberation—

"After he gets everything off his mind, he'll probably tell us all about himself, Sugar. He's told me some already."

"I don't care about that!" she flared, and somehow Jerry thought she was saying it so emphatically to convince herself. "But sometimes, like tonight, he makes me feel peculiar. The way he acts; it seems as though he was afraid that somebody was poisoning me against him. He asked me over and over again whether I'd do anything for him, not caring whether you or any one else liked him—"

"He's sort of mixed up in his mind, I guess," Jerry told her. "He feels he's such a stranger that maybe I'm not precisely for him. But that'll all turn out all right."

She stooped over and kissed him, and then from the doorway she said—

"Good night, Jerry. You're a dear!"

Which was none too good for Jerry's peace of mind.

VIII

IT WAS eleven o'clock in the evening of the next day, before operations could be resumed at the well. That witching hour found Jerry, Braden, and the regular roughnecks all hard at work. Once again the drill-stem started down. Two o'clock in the morning, after vexatious delays which tried even the quiet nerves of the young flyer, found them coming out of the hole again, with the all-important core at the foot of nineteen hundred feet of pipe.

Braden was proving himself a roughneck of parts. He and Jerry were relieving the regular crew, some of whom were ready to drop in their tracks. As each length of drill-stem came clear of the hole, Braden handled his big wrench with a lightning-like facility which made the regular men sit up and take notice. He and Jerry, on the drilling floor, with Greasy Hemingway at the throttle, formed the nucleus of a crew which would have delighted any oil man's heart.

Four o'clock, and the worn-out machinery had more than three-quarters of the stem out of the hole. Jerry, despite the growing excitement and taut expectancy which had him in their grip, was constantly reminded by Braden's nearness of the problem which confronted him. The conversation with Helen the night before had stimulated him to a decision. Word or no word, it was his duty, as he conceived it, to leave no stone unturned in an effort to find out all there was to know about Braden. Not for publication, necessarily, but to safeguard Helen.

There were so many things which were mysterious—that poker game at Slater's for instance. And then the fact that Braden had not exposed O'Geary and claimed the reward, if he was certain, as he had told Jerry later, that O'Geary would kill him. O'Geary's dying words had seemed to indicate that Braden was some very unusual character—probably far from a law-abiding one. The way he had said—

"Do you know who that is? That's Streak—Streak Bir—"

Then the robbery of Haslam. That was funny, in a way, too. Most of all was the fact that Braden, despite his relationship with Jerry through Helen, was so persistently secretive. Outside of the one time when he had vaguely sketched his past, he had said nothing whatever. Not even the most likely details, such as who he was getting the capital from to lease the offset acreage around Junior No. 1. And that matter of the Lucky Strike shares, too. Of course, in no case was there anything definite to go on, and ordinarily Jerry, master of the art of minding his own business, would have bothered his head not at all as to who Braden was, or what his motives were. But with Helen in the deal, it made things somewhat different. A horse of a different radish, as Madden expressed it to himself.

What made small things significant was the man himself. Talking like a well-educated man, confessed soldier of fortune, secretive, and yet going out of his way to be friendly, once in a while a pulsing human being, but most of the time a cynical automaton—

There came a grinding of metal, and then a clanking. Jerry snapped to full attention—and then cursed as he had never cursed before. The rotary rig had gone bad—and the square length of pipe to which the main drill-stem was attached, and which is held in the iron jaws of the revolving iron disk on the floor of a derrick, had disappeared. Several lengths of drill-stem had fallen down into the hole—nineteen hundred feet down—and the well was ruined. Even a tool carelessly dropped down a well plugs up the hole for good, unless, through a miracle, it is fished out.

For a minute there was utter silence. Hemingway sat down wearily.

"Because we didn't have money, we had tuh git second hand stuff, and she's been wearin' out more'n more," he said, as though talking to himself.

A wan moon shone down on a little tragedy out there in the lonesome mesquite. The well was gone—and the tens of thousands of dollars necessary to drill another were as unattainable as that same moon riding high in the sky. If there was a ten-thousand-barrel gusher in that ground they could never bring it in.

Braden said nothing. He stood beside the hole, arms folded, and his face was as grim as death. Up to a second before, there had been a shot at a fortune for every man there. Now they were simply men who had gambled from one to three thousand dollars each—all they had—and lost without even a run for their money.

No one, it seemed, had the heart to say anything, but two of the roughnecks had tears in their eyes.

Then Hemingway, sitting on the edge of the floor beside his engine, leaped to his feet.

"By ——, listen!" he cried, and his voice in the darkness had a wild note in it, as it rang through the night air.

The fireman, who had been walking in from the boiler, broke into a run. Jerry, his huge body taut as drawn wire, strained his ears. There was a rumbling deep in the bowels of the earth—

"By all that's holy, she's coming in!" roared Braden.

"The shock o' that droppin' drill-stem did it—we was right tuh the sand—" chattered one roughneck—big Hawkins—and his eyes were like cats' in the gloom.

The rumbling grew louder.

"Run for it!" shouted Hemingway, and the men came to their senses.

Like hares, they darted away from the derrick as the noise grew louder, like the approach of some grumbling giant coming up from the center of the earth.

It was at times like this that Jerry usually became as cool as a well-chilled cucumber. Just when the climax was reached—then it seemed that he took hold of himself, and became peacefully calculating. In the shelter of the mesquite, waiting and watching, he knew that they had a well. And he and Braden were the only silent ones in that gibbering group.

He wondered how strong it would be—what was going to happen—

It did not take long to find out. The smell of gas, already strong, became almost overpowering. Then, with a roar as of a pent-up torrent let loose, mingled with the half-heard clanking of metal, there shot up from the hole fifty feet of drill-stem, borne on the crest of a resistless, nine-inch geyser of oil. With a clang which could be heard for miles the drill-stem smote the traveling block suspended directly over the well. Lucky for the derrick man that he had been able to get down in time.

The drill-stem tore its way up through the derrick, but by some freak of fortune it did not weaken the structure enough to make it collapse. The traveling block swung wildly as the gusher buffeted it, and the oil was turned into gold-green spray. As the block swung to one side that bubbling column of oil flung itself high over the crown-block—and the crown-block is a hundred and twelve feet from the ground.

Little Allen, fifty years old and discouraged, sat down and cried. Two of the younger men danced a wild hornpipe, and Hemingway, veteran of the oil game, took a chew of tobacco and smiled. Braden looked at Jerry, and his long, narrow eyes were thin streaks of living flame in his face. Silently he shook hands. Then he went into action. As though by right, and certainly by unspoken assent of the others, he took charge.

"When she quits heading, you can get her under control, can't you?" he shouted to Hemingway, and that worthy nodded.

"Bottle her up until that storage tank gits here and we git a pit dug," he returned. "I hope she is a header."

"By ——, we've got to keep this secret for a few hours, anyway! I've got to get that acreage—it'll be held at a thousand dollars an acre! You'll have to pinch her off!"

The well headed for twenty minutes, and it was the combined judgment of the onlookers that it had flowed at least a hundred barrels, and probably more. Many wells flow in "heads," which come at regular intervals, varying from five minutes to several hours. Between heads the oil does not flow. In "headers" it is necessary for the gas pressure to gather strength enough to force the oil upward.

Naturally, while the well is not flowing, work can be done upon it, and sometimes it is possible to plug it up and keep it from flowing at all.

The Junior, it proved, headed every twenty minutes. Which meant a 2500 barrel well.

"Pinch her off if you can!" Braden summed up the situation. "In any event, keep everybody a long distance away from it! Jerry and I'll get busy picking up acreage, fly to Houston and get the Farley tract, and nobody'll know we've got a well, with luck, until we own all the territory there is!"

A few moments thereafter the two of them were on their way to town, while the roughnecks went to work plugging up the well. Braden left Jerry in the center of town with the words:

"Get the flying stuff and be sure the ship's ready to go. Meet you out there, after I pick up the small tracts. So long—I'm starting to work!"

They parted, Jerry to go to the house and tell the two women the news and get helmets and goggles, and Braden on the trail of his lawyer.

Incidentally, Braden, before doing another thing, sent a wire to Mr. Henry Mordecai, prosperous jeweler of Houston. The wire read—

"Have fifteen thousand ready. Arrive around noon."

HOWEVER, it was after three when he actually made a creditable landing on Ellsworth Field. And all the acreage had been picked up, save the Farley tract.

"We'll be going back in an hour," Braden said as they climbed out of the ship, close by the long row of white hangars on the eastern rim of the big airdrome. "I'll hop the interurban into Houston—"

"I think I'll run in," drawled Jerry.

No more tricks, as far as Braden was concerned, were going to be missed by him.

"It's Saturday afternoon, and nobody's left here at the field I know."

Braden, tall and cool and collected, did not show any surprize. He started to object, Jerry thought, and then seemed to think better of it.

"Thought you might want to see to the ship," he said easily. "Let's go."

Jerry arranged with a mechanic for gassing and oiling the ship—a customary courtesy extended to visiting civilian craft on any army airdrome—and accompanied Braden on the eighteen mile interurban ride into Houston. He did not know exactly why he was so anxious to watch Braden on this particular deal, except that the man habitually covered his movements with such secrecy, that the flyer was anxious to have a "look-see," as he expressed it. For Helen's sake, he was starting to learn all there was to know about Braden.

Once in Houston, Braden said abruptly—

"Now I'm going to be busy as a catfish. Where'll I meet you in, say, an hour and a half?"

"Rice Hotel lobby," Jerry suggested gently. "Isn't there anything I can do?"

"Not a thing," Braden assured him.

He eyed Jerry searchingly. Then he asked—

"What'll you do with yourself?"

"Oh, I'll drop in a movie," returned Madden. "Here's one here. See you in an hour and a half—"

"Right. So long."

Jerry turned into the lobby of the gaudily placarded theater. In breeches and boots, with a flannel shirt on and a cap on his head, he was not dressed entirely in the mode, so to speak. But as in every Texas city, the crowds of Houston did not think his unconventional dress at all conspicuous.

"I feel like a two-for-a-cent Nick Carter," Jerry soliloquized shamefacedly as he went back to the entrance of the lobby, without buying a ticket, and looked up the street.

Yes, there was Braden, and Jerry followed him at a safe distance.

He saw him turn into a jewelry store, which struck him as being a bit peculiar. He took a chance and walked by, looking in as he did so. Braden was not to be seen. He must be in the rear of the store—

"I guess this fellow Mordecai must be supplying some capital," Jerry told himself.

He parked his body against a building on the other side of the street, behind a group of curbstone loiterers, and waited for Braden to come out. This awaited event happened in less than five minutes. And when it happened Braden looked across the street, and spotted Jerry.

He stopped short a moment, and then crossed the thoroughfare with long strides. The lines around the thin mouth were deeper as he asked calmly—

"Didn't go to the show, eh?"

"No. Decided I wouldn't like the picture. I'm just looking around the big city. I'm sure surprized to see you coming out of that store—"

"Stopped in a minute to buy Helen a ring. The owner's a friend of mine, and I can get stuff at wholesale."

There was a moment packed with drama. To Jerry, suspicious as he was, the explanation did not ring true. It did not seem conceivable that Braden would take time, when every instant was precious, to buy a ring right then. At any instant the news of the well in Hadley might get out—it might be out now— And in that case the Farley tract would be priced at close to a half million dollars, probably.

And Braden, it seemed, knew that he had slipped. His harsh face did not change, but in his eyes there was a strange expression, as though he was contemplating something, gathering his forces—

"Well, I've wasted enough time. Taxi!"

The passing taxi drew up to the curb, and Braden got in.

"See you at the Rice!" he called, and the last glimpse Jerry had of him was through the rear window.

Braden was looking back at him, and that mocking droop at the corner of his mouth seemed to be a dare flung back at the motionless flyer.

As the taxi whirled out of sight around a corner, Jerry made his decision. The next minute he was in the well-appointed jewelry store, demanding to see the proprietor. In the little rear office he saw a fleshy, ruddy-faced, gray-haired man with full lips and an air of well-fed comfort. Mr. Mordecai had a few beads of perspiration on his forehead, and he looked at the tanned, unusually dressed airman with considerable curiosity.

"What can I do for you?" he asked.

"Do you know a Mr. Donald Braden?" Jerry inquired easily.

"Not that I know of— No, I'm sure I don't."

"That's funny," said Jerry gently, but his gray eyes blazed down into the bloodshot ones before him in a way that made the jeweler get to his feet precipitately. "He was just in this office, and he just told me you were a friend of his!"

The flush ebbed away from the jeweler's cheeks, and suddenly his face seemed sunken and old.

"Oh, pardon me," he stuttered. "For the moment I—"

"What did he buy in here?"

"Why—er—"

Right then several details seemed to click into place in Jerry's mind.

"Not a —— thing—but he sold you a bunch of jewels, one of them a very large man's ring—diamond—"

The jeweler collapsed into his chair. Had he not been so patently a very much frightened human being, Jerry probably would not have suspected any real collusion on Mordecai's part. He would have given the man credit for buying Haslam's jewels without knowing they were stolen—or suspecting anything wrong. But now, intent on getting to the bottom of whatever was afoot, the pilot went on deliberately:

"Those jewels were stolen in Hadley a few days ago. Come clean, mister man, and save your hide if you can!"

"Who—who are you?" whispered Mordecai.

"Never you mind right now—but I'm on Braden's trail and you—"

The jeweler's head sank into his hands. When he looked up, there were tears in his eyes.

"I'll tell you everything," he said dully. "Not that there's much."

It was short—and ugly. A certain very beautiful girl had become acquainted with Mr. Mordecai, and she had inveigled him up to see her at a certain shady hotel—and then Braden, her supposed husband, had come in. It was the old badger game. The blackmail was set at what Mordecai considered a very small price. In return for Braden's saying nothing—Mordecai was a family man, a member of the city council, and a prominent business man—the jeweler was to purchase, at their full retail value, certain jewels to be submitted to him by Braden. He had received a wire that morning to have fifteen thousand dollars deposited to the credit of Braden in the First National Bank of Houston before the bank closed at noon. Braden had lived up to his part of the bargain, which was more than Mordecai had expected he would, by delivering the jewels to him.

As Jerry immediately realized, this touch was typical of Braden. His object had been to get money enough to finance that acreage himself—he had never had any one behind him—and for that reason he had gone into a comparatively small jewel robbery, and the sordid badger game.

"What could I do?" concluded Mordecai hopelessly. "I knew they must be stolen, of course. But I'd have been ruined—my wife, my friends, my business—"

"Don't worry," Madden cut in. "Hand over those jewels to the rightful owner, Mr. Haslam, when he calls for 'em, and you'll get credit for being as honest as the day is long. Braden'll be where he can't bother you—maybe. Good-by, sir. I won't talk—you're safe—and I've got a lot to do."

But just what, he did not know. Should he wait for Braden? The man already was inclined to think that the flyer suspected him—and a few minutes before, outside of the store, it had seemed to Jerry that he had realized the slip he had made.

Quickly, the pilot summed up the possibilities. There was but one explanation for the flying lessons and the monopoly of the ship—quick and easy escape to the border if necessary—

At a half run, Madden swung down the street, and around the corner to the Rice Hotel. Here he left a five dollar bill and a note in the hands of a bellboy, with instructions to page Mr. Braden every five minutes from then on, and, finding him, to deliver the note. The note merely said—

> Have gone back to the field. Will meet you there.
> JERRY.

Then he rushed around to the police station and made a report. Checked up in a minute by telephoning Mordecai, the dragnet went out for Braden. Then Jerry waited for an interurban to Ellsworth Field.

If Braden was suspicious enough, he might have gone direct to Ellsworth and hopped off by himself. If only the man had not seen him when he came out of the store! The flyer felt instinctively that Braden knew the jig was up when he had answered Jerry's surprized question as he had— Hadn't thought of a good explanation quickly enough—

Madden was about to call up Ellsworth Field when his car came along. Inasmuch as they only ran once a half hour, time was precious, so he boarded it. And forty-five minutes later, at the airdrome, he found his worst fears realized.

Braden had taken off nearly an hour before. He had arrived in a taxi, driving fast, cranked up and left. And there was a note from him for Jerry, so characteristic of the smoothness of Braden and his ability to cover his tracks that Jerry, excited as he was, had to grin.

> Dear Jerry:—
> Sorry to hang you up in Houston, but I'll be back for you tomorrow morning. Something happened that made it necessary for me to rush, without a minute's delay, back to Hadley in order to finally land that Farley acreage. Farley sold it yesterday to Squint Conroy. Maybe we can get it cheap. Went to the hotel first to look for you, but you weren't there.
> BRADEN.

"After I'd waited for three hours he figured I'd come out here finally, and this note would keep me from suspecting anything—if I didn't already have proof. If I did feel uneasy and found out anything about what he was up to, the note couldn't do any harm. Now the question is; is he staggering through the air toward the border—or depending on having an hour or two in Hadley—"

It was about an even chance, he decided swiftly. Braden couldn't figure definitely, no matter how uneasy he felt about Jerry, that the flyer would find out exactly what he was doing. Mordecai would naturally try to hide the transaction—and it wasn't reasonable to think that Braden would realize Jerry's tactics in going to the jeweler in person, and getting all information from him. No, if Braden had any particular reason for stopping in Hadley—it was on an almost direct route to the border, too—he would chance it. Possibly he would not even go on to the border at all. No one had anything definite on him, as far as Braden knew—they were nominally his friends—

And Helen! To the inwardly raging, but outwardly cool, Madden, there was but one explanation of Braden's interest in Helen now. Her money.

In an instant, he was at the headquarters phone, calling the commanding officer.

IX

A HALF hour later, enthroned in lonely majesty, Jerry was a half mile above the earth, and had covered a quarter of the hundred miles between Houston and Hadley. Beneath him, a four-hundred-and-fifty-horsepower De Haviland, with its Liberty roaring along wide open, was covering the deserted country below at the rate of a hundred and twenty miles an hour. Seventeen hundred times a minute, the six-foot prop was revolving and the ton-and-a-half bomber was vibrating in every strut and spar, as the powerful motor strained to its utmost.

Major Curran, the c. o. at Ellsworth, had proved to be a sport in every sense of the word. Jerry was a second lieutenant in the Reserve Corps, which gave him the right to fly army ships at stated times, for practise, and this had made the red tape very easy to cut. When the major had absorbed Madden's story and been assured of his identity by means of a telephone call to an officer on the field whom Jerry knew through his friend Young, the orders had flown thick and fast. The De Haviland had been on the line and warmed up, by the time the flyer had covered the ground between the c. o.'s house and the hangar.

According to Jerry's calculations Braden, if he had flown the comparatively slow *Jenny* to Hadley, had arrived at the field there a few minutes after Madden's descent on Ellsworth. If he had any business to transact in Hadley and planned on hopping off for the border, it would take him some time to get from the field to town and back again. Likewise, he would have to gas the ship by himself before taking off, and that would mean a further delay. There was an even chance that the flyer could reach Hadley before Braden left there for Mexico, if such were his plans. It would only be twenty minutes, now, before Hadley came in sight, at the rate he was going.

His eyes swept the instrument board constantly. Never in his life had he been so taut in a ship—for some reason he felt that a forced landing, now, would be an unparalleled disaster. Just why he could not explain, but he had a persistent feeling that he must get to Hadley immediately.

As his great ship flashed through the evening sky his mind was busy piecing all that he knew together. It seemed, now, that all Braden's operations were as obvious as the cloud the ship was passing at the moment. Braden had used every effort to put himself on a very friendly footing with Jerry, Hemingway, and the rest for one purpose; that of making money, if there was any to be made, on the Junior well. The proved field was so well developed, and acreage was at such a high figure, that a free lance without capital had no chance to make a fortune there.

That poker game at Slater's had been crooked in spots—probably the fight at the bar had been started by an accomplice of Braden's to give that worthy and Krooz, his accomplice, an opportunity to switch decks. The way Braden and Krooz had raised and reraised each other on small hands indicated that it was a freeze-out proposition to force the others to lay down better hands because it cost too much to stay. And the prime object of the game had been to put Jerry so far in the hole that he would mortgage his share in the well to get money to continue with. This plan of action had been spiked by his refusal to give up any of his share.

And there, to Jerry's mind, Braden, had shown his genius. Instantly he had switched his campaign, and by deliberately giving advice, which Krooz's playing from then on proved sound, he had given Jerry his money back and cemented the bonds of friendship between them; all for the purpose of worming his way into the affairs of Junior No. 1. The O'Geary matter, of course, had been an accident. But Braden's apparently frank confession to Jerry afterward had been another disarming stratagem to accomplish two things—persuade Jerry to hold inviolate whatever unflattering truths the dying convict had confided in him, and get the airman's sympathy for Braden, posing as a reformed man who wanted a chance to go straight.

Thinking these things, the flyer's subconscious mind was noting that the oil pressure was twenty-five, the air pressure a steady three, and the voltmeter charging one ampere. Everything was all right—those needles were hopping around like tumblebugs in the terrific vibration—

As for Helen, maybe Braden really loved her, but the chances were strong that it was her money he was after. It had been easy for him to fascinate her—

The explanation as to how the jewel robbery had been accomplished must be substantially as he and Haslam had figured. The reason for it was to obtain money to finance the acreage around Junior No. 1. If all had gone well with Braden he would have come through perfectly. He'd have had acreage worth hundreds of thousands of dollars, and got it on a shoestring. He would have been ace-high with the Junior company. Evidently he had gone to Squinty Conroy, prodded him into making that effort to steal a look at the log of the well and then double-crossed that cock-eyed promoter, and established himself more firmly with the Junior crowd by warning them of the proposed attack. This procedure was infinitely more desirable from Braden's point of view than throwing in with Conroy, for two reasons. One was, that no matter what the log showed at twelve hundred feet, buying acreage then was strictly a gamble on a long shot. Waiting until the core was taken reduced the gambling element to a minimum. And Braden evidently had had no money to speak of at that time. The second reason was, that Squinty was so crooked no one, not even Braden, could trust him in anything.

Truly, Jerry reflected, Braden was a devious and accomplished man.

"He could get the badges, clubs and pants of a whole squad of cops; and if they ever get him in jail he'll sell the place to the governor or something," Madden soliloquized.

His eyes scanned the earth below. There was Young's Creek ahead—Hadley was less than fifteen miles away now. There was a slight ground haze—he could not see it yet.

The adventure would have been nothing but pleasant, to the flyer straining forward in his seat, had it not been for Helen. He was as nervous as a woman because of her. No telling what Braden might be up to—he might even want her to elope with him, if he was fearful enough of Jerry. Had it not been for Braden's relationship with the girl, however, Jerry knew that he would never in the world have thought so much about what Braden was doing, or who he was. He'd have minded his own business, and Braden would have operated without a chance of detection.

As the ship crossed the small stream a terrific bump hit it, as always happens when a plane crosses cool water on a hot day. Somehow it seemed that the ship was vibrating more and more. Better cut down the motor a few revolutions—to about fifteen fifty, say—

But it was too late. Abruptly it died—without more than three preliminary sputters of warning.

Automatically, the cursing pilot nosed the ship down, and his eyes scanned the earth below for a landing place. There was one, right beneath him. There was an isolated house down there. And close to it a large cotton field, with the plants less than half grown, could be used for the landing. He could see two men and some women, looking up at him.

THEN a cloud of blue smoke swirled back from the engine. In a split second Jerry had closed the throttle, turned off the spark, and was twirling the gas cut-off wildly. He knew now what had happened. Running the motor wide open had caused such extreme vibration that the gasoline line had broken somewhere; gasoline had sprayed the terrifically hot motor, and he was face to face with the most horrible emergency an airman knows.

A terrific wave of heat seemed to wither his body. Blue flame was playing over the silent Liberty. He jerked back on the stick, and banked at the same time. For an instant the great ship hung suspended in the sky in a vertical bank, nose slightly up. He jammed on top rudder, and the De Haviland dropped earthward in a breathtaking side-slip. Due to this maneuver the draft blew the flames upward, away from the pilot, whereas a straight dive would have sent them directly back toward the ship.

The speed of the slip generated such a powerful air-stream, that it seemed as though the skin on the left side of his face would be ripped off. His goggles blew around constantly. The flames were still there, and a cloud of smoke marked the trail of the dropping monster of the air. With his square face set as though carved in granite, and in his eyes something of the bleak fatalism which is the mark of the flying man, Jerry fought to keep his craft in that slip. If he ever let the nose drop, it would take less than ten seconds to have the De Haviland outlined in flame.

He did it. At a thousand feet it appeared that the fire was out. The leading edge of the right wing, which was uppermost, was charred and smouldering, but just a little smoke came from the motor now, and none of the linen on the ship had really caught fire. Finally, he dared to drop the nose for a moment. There was no increase in the smoke, although a wave of heat which threw him into a momentary panic, reached him from the half-molten motor. He slipped again, this time to the right, and then dropped the ship into a dive once more. Satisfied, his blackened face deigned to grin a bit with relief, and he sent the De Haviland downward in sweeping spirals, which were so steep that the shrill of the wires was as noisy as a half-throttled motor would have been.

Below, the onlookers were gazing upward as though turned to stone. It is no easy matter for a pilot to make a forced landing with an absolutely dead motor, but Jerry did it. He dropped his ship in an easy dive over the fence bounding the western edge of the cotton field, held it in the air as long as he could, and then, jerking the stick as far back as it would go, dropped the bomber into the soft, plowed earth in a stall landing.

He almost made it, but the earth was entirely too soft. The wheels dug in, and slowly the ship settled over on her nose. The propellor, however, had been whirling so slowly that it was not shattered. It was simply a nose-up, and no damage done.

The two men were at his side by the time he had climbed out. The flyer wasted no time. In a few seconds he had explained his predicament, and was leading them, on a dead run, toward the near-by stable. Five minutes later, riding cross-country, he was loping his rangy pony along, taking the few low fences as he came to them.

It was a seven-mile ride, through mesquite, over open fields, part of the way following trails. He knew exactly where Hadley was, however, and followed what amounted to a bee-line for the flying field, two miles south of town. The first thing to find out was whether or not the *Jenny* was roosting on its home grounds.

Two miles from the field he hit the Taylor road, which ran between Hadley and Ecorse, and the course of which took it only a half mile north of the field. Once on this soft, dirt pike, he settled down and rode.

He had saved the horse, giving him breathers regularly and holding him down to the tireless lope of the cow-pony, but now he shook him up and the steed responded nobly. That last two miles were covered at a wild gallop.

Jerry went off the road to save time, taking a diagonal course for the field when he was half a mile from it. The pony rushed through the thin mesquite, and Jerry, riding close to his horse with the cowboy seat, kept his body swaying constantly to avoid low-hanging limbs. There is no riding more graceful than that of a puncher going fast through mesquite, where at any moment a limb is liable to drag him from his horse.

It seemed an age before the pony came clear of the brush, and thundered across the open ground which merged into the field. Up close to the hangar the ship was standing, and a few feet away from it there was an automobile. Beside it were two people—Helen and Braden. In it was an uninterested taxi driver.

Jerry, riding like mad, jumped his horse over the fence as Braden ran for the ship. The flyer could see him bend over the cockpit, putting on the ignition, and then dash around to the propellor. Helen was standing motionless beside the car.

The motor sprang into life when Jerry was not more than fifty yards from the ship. In a second Braden, helmet and goggles still on, was in the cockpit. He jazzed the throttle, and, as the eight cylinder motor barked in answer, Jerry's pony shied wildly. Jerry, taken unawares, was thrown fifteen feet as the horse bucked.

Half stunned, he bounced to his feet. He was twenty-five yards from the plane, and almost in front of it. Braden had been trying to persuade Helen to elope with him, by air—

The outlaw's head was thrust over the side of the ship, and in his helmet and goggles, with his white teeth showing in a mirthless smile, he looked like a sardonic demon. With a roar the motor went into full cry, the ship got in motion, and Braden swung it slightly to the right to clear the running Madden.

Scarcely conscious of having a plan, Madden flung his big body at the passing ship. It had not yet picked up speed, and the flyer landed on top of the fuselage, a few feet back of the rear cockpit. In a second his fingers dug through the linen, and he took a firm grip on the sturdy, ash cross-struts.

He had a wild idea that he could put the tail-surfaces out of commission, making it impossible to fly the ship, by kicking through rudder and horizontal stabilizers with his heavy boots. But the ship was about to take off now—

If Braden had a gun the Texan knew that

Jerry Madden was done for as the ship took the air. He knew, however, that the adventurer had had none in Houston, for Jerry had been with him when he changed his clothes before the trip, and the shoulder holster had been left at home.

Clinging to the ship with a firm grip, his legs helping as a rider's do on a horse, Jerry looked up into the long, narrow eyes a few feet in front of him. Braden had no gun on, or he'd have shot!

The man was too poor a flyer to look around except momentarily, and now, a hundred feet above the ground, he turned to his work. He flung the ship into a terrific bank, jerking it cruelly. But Jerry held on as if the ship were a bucking horse. Exultantly, he realized that Braden could barely fly level—a tail-spin, or complicated maneuvers of any sort, the man must know, would kill him as well as his unwelcome passenger.

Bit by bit Jerry dragged himself toward the cockpit—only three feet in front of him. He was always careful to dig in with his fingers on the strut ahead, before releasing his hold with the other hand. Three times Braden tried to throw him off, but Jerry clung to his frail perch like grim death.

It was a terrific ordeal, but Madden's mental condition made him anesthetic to fear. A thousand feet below him, the ground was like a scene painted on canvas. The idea of falling never occurred to him—his world was bounded by that plane and the man in it. He might have been ten thousand feet high, or only a hundred. The terrific blast of the propeller was like the hand of some giant of the air, striving mightily to tear him from the frail little cross-struts, which were the means of saving him from that mighty fall. His very breath was torn from his nostrils, and he had to bury his head to breathe. Every time he thrust one hand ahead to get a new hold, there was a second of terrible apprehension; and the last time that the awkwardly flying Braden tried to throw him off by a quick bank, there was a moment when Jerry, the ship suspended on its side, almost lost his grip with the upper foot, and was practically hanging by his hands. Had Braden been a real flyer, Jerry's chances of staying aboard would have been those of a man standing on a plank and shooting Niagara Falls.

They were several miles south of Hadley when Jerry got his two hands on the leather-covered cowling of the rear cockpit. Gathering himself for the effort, he awaited a moment when the ship, under Braden's unsteady guidance, was absolutely level, then he pulled himself over into the cock-pit, using his knees to help propel his body, and landed there in a triumphant heap.

After strapping himself in, he permitted himself a grin into the unreadable eyes, shielded by colored goggles, which blazed back into his own.

To his intense surprize, Braden smiled. Then he threw up his hands. He knew he was beaten. Had he had a gun—

"I'd never have jumped the ship, and he'd have been in Mexico within an hour," Jerry soliloquized. "I'm not going to take any chances with him, though!"

Pursuant to this laudable decision, he selected a weighty wrench from the tool-kit, and methodically smote Braden on the head. None too gently, either. The outlaw was looking straight ahead, so he had no warning. Then the flyer banked around, and in a half-dive, with the motor throttled, sent the ship speeding back toward the field.

As he was about to land he saw Helen, a huddled heap on the ground, and the taxi driver bending over her. Then he saw her get to her feet, and stand like a statue while he landed. As he taxied to the line he waved to her, and she came darting toward the ship. Her eyes looked as though she had been crying for a week, but the most radiant smile he had ever seen was like a rainbow through the tears.

She threw herself in his arms as he landed on the ground. For a moment there was nothing but a storm of weeping. Then she was able to say—

"I—I never knew until now—"

"Knew what, Sugar?"

"What a fool I was," she flashed, with some of her old spirit. "I don't care whether you—you like it or not—but here I've been loving—loving you all this time—I didn't know it—"

"That suits me," drawled Jerry—

X

ON THE way back to town, with Braden tied up like a mummy in the front seat and Helen, who seemed as if she had become a woman in the last half hour, snuggled close to him in the back seat, Jerry became the author of what he considered a very desirable plan of campaign. Pursuant thereof, he left Helen at the Knight home, and drove to the domicile of Mr. Haslam. After pointed conversation with that rotund gentleman, who was enjoying his evening meal in the dining room below, the two went out to the car, requested the taxi driver to take a few steps down the street, and then Jerry addressed, for the first time, the apparently unmoved Braden.

"Well, Braden, you ought to do a stretch for this," Jerry told him.

Braden grinned sardonically.

"That's not the half of it—I will," he returned. "Madden, I played you for a sucker—and I was wrong. I apologize. One thing I want to tell you, though. I wasn't playing with Helen. I think a lot of her, if that makes you feel any better."

"You'd say that, anyway," returned Madden gently. "Braden, there's a way you can go free. As a matter of fact, all we've got against you, definitely, is stealing Haslam's jewelry. You own five hundred acres of land, which you bought with Haslam's money. It may not be legal, but ethically Haslam's jewels bought that land. It's his. You sign over all that acreage to Haslam. He'll turn it over to the Junior Company, and then after we make some money we'll redeem his jewels from Mordecai. So nobody'll lose.

"In return for that, we'll let you beat it. The police are looking for you, but if we don't prosecute you're all right. How about it?"

"I'm willing, naturally."

"We'll get busy right now, then, and get it over. And I've borrowed Haslam's gun, and I'll drill you quick if you make a false move. Get that?"

Braden looked up at the drawling young Texan and nodded.

"I do. I wish I'd had it this afternoon."

"I know you do. Let's go."

In two hours the Junior Company was the owner of more than five hundred acres offset from a well which was flowing, flush production, four thousand five hundred barrels a day—which meant a settled production of at least three thousand.

An hour later Braden, Krooz, the hard-boiled but good looking Gloria and a rat-eyed little dope fiend named Jacobs, the fourth member of the hijacking quartette, were standing outside Slater's saloon, escorted by Haslam, Hemingway, Jerry and chief of police Kenton. Jerry and Kenton went into the saloon with Braden, acceding to his request, while the others stayed outside. Braden shot four hundred dollars at the crap table, let it ride when he threw a seven, and then made his point, a six.

"Now we can pay our fares to Smackover," he remarked casually, as he cashed his chips. "Thanks for the chance. You're gentlemen and scholars."

"Better go straight in Smackover," said Kenton grimly. "Yore fame'll go ahead of yuh, so to speak. Sorry we can't entertain yuh in our bosoms any longer."

At the train—the ten o'clock for San Antone—Braden said his farewell to Jerry.

"I'd have got away with it, Jerry," he remarked, "if I hadn't broken a life-long rule by getting mixed up with a woman. You're young yet. Let Mordecai and me be a lesson to you!"

His mocking face peered down from the platform for a second, and then vanished inside the car.

XI

THE combined analyses of Jerry, Haslam and Hemingway were startlingly close to the truth regarding Braden's methods. He had talked willingly; admitting freely the method of the jewel robbery, the frameup with Beardsley to swindle Jerry out of his share in the Junior well by means of a fake core from a good well, and also that he had deliberately double-crossed Conroy in order to get into the good graces of the Junior well group.

It was several days later, however, before another "right devious machination," as Haslam called it, came to light. This happened when Jerry interviewed Mr. Farley, owner of the thousand acre tract, when that old gentleman descended on Hadley to dispose of his acreage. Braden had gone to see the dried up little Texan on his first trip to Houston, and told him that he had a buyer for his acreage at the asking price—sixty dollars an acre.

"Then he says to me: 'If I can git more will yuh give me a small split of the extra money I git—say twenty-five per cent?'" Farley narrated. "I says, 'yes,' says I. Shore. Then he says, 'I got means o' knowin' how the well looks. You hold on.

If she looks bad when the core's took, I'll dispose of yore stuff for seventy. My man'll go that high. If she looks good, hold on, and if the well comes in the land'll be worth a mint.' O' course he didn't have no buyer. I was tuh hold on—if she didn't pan out, he lost nothin', and if she did, he'd get a big bunch o' dinero fur nothin'! A smooth *hombre*, wasn't he?"

"He could steal anything but a woman!" grinned Haslam, who was present. "That's when Jerry started tuh mobilize for action!"

Which was just what he had tried to do, at that. Helen confessed to Jerry that Braden had called her up from a house a half mile from the field, begged her to come out there, and then used every method of persuasion at his command to induce her to elope with him. Whether he was after her or her money, or both, Jerry could never quite decide. But Helen, with the first wild thrill of her fascination over, had come to her senses in time. She absolutely refused to go.

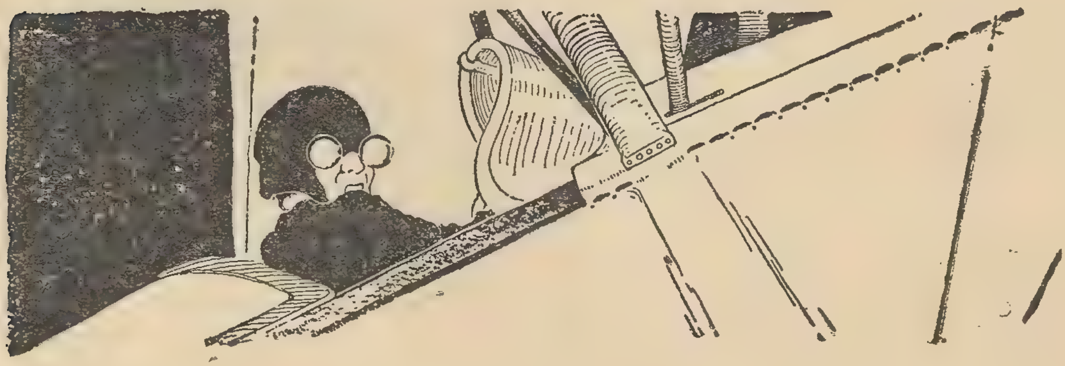
"And when I saw you hanging on that ship I knew why I'd said no—and wouldn't have married him any time, anywhere!" she told Jerry, to that young man's great satisfaction.

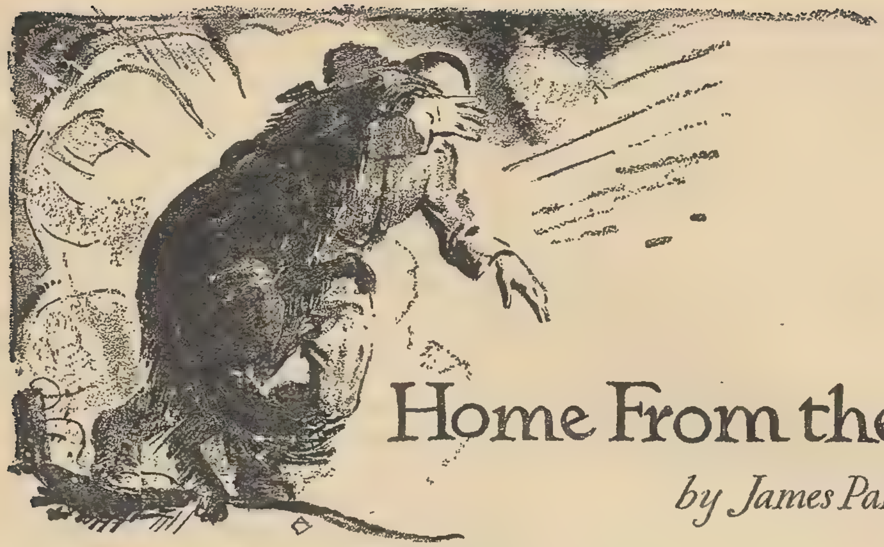
A week after the Junior Oil Company had sold their well and entire acreage, consisting of five hundred and thirty acres, to one of the Standard group for seven hundred thousand dollars, the Hadley "Gusher" announced with a loud flourish of trumpets the impending nuptials of the rising young oil operator and aviator, Gerald Madden, to Miss Helen Knight. As a wedding present, among others, Jerry was presented with the five-hundred-dollar reward which was due him for the capture, dead or alive, of Gat O'Geary.

The honeymoon was over, and dozens of wells had sprung up south of town on the former Junior acreage, when the last news of Braden reached Hadley through the medium of the San Antonio "Express." He had been killed in a gambling row in Smackover, after trying to make a deck of cards do tricks. And it was disclosed soon thereafter that Braden was really Garry Bird, known in the California fields and Mexico as "the Streak." He had never been in jail, although at the time of the great mail robbery in Colorado, five years before, he had been the reputed leader of the band which included Gat O'Geary.

What obscure, subtle maneuvering had been responsible for Braden's going free and the rest going to jail, and just what characteristic Braden methods had resulted in the deadly feud between himself and O'Geary, Jerry never knew. But reading about him—gambler, soldier of fortune, officer in the Mexican army, oil operator, hijacker—he was forced to opine to his brand new wife:

"According to this, he's been everything but an actor, and right there's where he missed his vocation. If he put his heart in it, like he did when he was telling me about how he was a fallen angel that'd reformed, and making me believe he was the best friend I had on earth, he could've played a cake of ice in Uncle Tom's cabin and made it the star part!"





Home From the Wars

by James Parker Long

Author of "The Killer," "The Price of Freedom," etc.

TONALD, son of Grip, son of Rairin' Rab, son of Pawky Lowrie, and worthy to succeed them in their care of the black-faced, long-wooled ewes of the Laird of Brockbrae, was five stone five of grit and sand, bred to love his charges and his master, to serve them with love and with loyalty and at the last to lay down his life in their service. Do you wonder that Tonald was the only Scotsman of all Brockbrae that hung back as the kilties marched to the train, sporrans flopping, drones wailing and chaunter skirling pibrocks that set the heels adance and the bare knees aflash? What were the woes of Belgium or the crimes of the Hun to Tonald? He was leaving his sheep and only the fact that Tammas Rae was before him and had bid him "to heel" kept him from turning back.

Such was the breeding and the home leaving of Tonald of the ——th Highlanders, those silent men with the strange oaths, the forbidding faith and the heavy hands in battle. His parting from Tammas and the others was no such peaceful scene.

Three times the dour unflinching Gaels had scrambled out on to the shrapnel-churned mud from the sewer that was their home, had filed through lanes in tangled wire, had reached another sewer from which poured men in gray, a flood of them, had backed away before the torrent, taking toll for every step, but paying, too, until within their own ditch a flare called forth a blast of fire, which once more cleared the road across and pounded all flesh, living or dead, back into the dirt from whence it came. Three times Tonald had been first across and by no means last into the ditch.

Once more the flare was fired and another hundred thousand dollars' worth of shrapnel sprayed the ooze before the Scottish trench. Once more it raised and centered on their objective and once more the regiment, what was left of it, with deep, challenging, wordless cries scrambled over the parapet and splashed into a charge. As before, Tammas and Tonald were first over, the big dog skirmishing before the running men, an eye ever on his master, ready, as need arose, to guard his back when the push came. Once more the wave of gray, a thin wave now, arose to meet them but this time it swayed a minute as the Highlanders drove home their bayonets with deep "Hough! Hough!" and then it broke. Cries of "*Kamarad!*" arose and the whole press swayed into and disappeared within the trench.

It had cost a regiment of men but the line was straightened and when the support at last arrived with engineers to reverse the trench and work it into the allies' system they found scarce a hundred men in possession and among that hundred neither Tammas nor Tonald were numbered.

Daylight disclosed them. The man lay

"Home from the Wars," copyright, 1925, by James Parker Long.

face down, already half-buried in that mold which should ever wrap all that was mortal of him, and Tonald lay beside him, silent, grim, splashed with mud and bleeding from three bayonet cuts, but alive.

Silent he lay till strangers would have touched his master and then he rose, rumbling, and stood before him with bared teeth, barring the way. There was that in his manner that carried conviction and alone with his dead Tonald lay till with the falling of evening Lieutenant Angus came and ignored the threat with the sureness of old acquaintance. Before even his loving hand had touched Tammas, Tonald struck and added one more to the wounds of that gallant commander.

"Tonald, my mannie," the lieutenant told him, holding his dripping wrist and retiring to a safe distance. "It's na kindness yeer doin' your maister. We're e'en comin' an' if we canna come in peace we'll come wi' force."

Ten steps in any direction on that grisly field would take one to a rifle, dropped there by those who never more would need them.

A moment and the lieutenant was back with one. Armed with the butt he could tell another story. Tonald was all dog, but in the hands of an expert a butt is as fast as a boxer's fist, farther reaching and harder. Circle as he might, lightning like though his dashes might be, each charge was met by lashing heelplate and each blow weakened by so much the already weakened physical strength of the tyke.

His last charge was as bold as his first but so weak was he, so tired by blows and drained of blood, that he could not raise his hind quarters from the ground and only the convulsive torrent of hate sounds that bubbled roaring through skinned back lips as he dragged forward and the implacable glare of blood-rimmed eyes told the tale.

The final blow smashed home. The dog went limp and the giant Scot dropped on his knees in the mud by the side of the beast, soothing where he had beaten.

"Before ye gang to yeer duty," he ordered the squad who were caring for the dead, "be finding me straps to serve as leash and muzzle. The regiment is gone, and Tammas is dead; if his heart's na broke entire maybe he'll ha' me for maister when he's healed of his hurts."

AS TO that, Tonald thought differently. In the village where the pitiful remnant of the regiment lay and waited for reassignment, kindly hands tended bruise and slash. He bore no ill will for the man who had inflicted the bruises, he merely ignored him. He ate that which was set before him, endured the attentions which were forced on him by men in kilts and hated with flashing teeth and challenging roar everything else in the country, saboted men, lace-capped women, mongrel curs, prisoners in gray, soldiers in horizon blue or khaki. Any one of them was sufficient to rouse him to a fury. Between times he lay stretched at length in leonine pose and dreamed.

Once, indeed, he roused and was more his smiling self. Black men from Africa had been served a ration of sheep on the hoof and drove their feast bleating through the tiny street near which Tonald was chained. He came to his feet at the first faint sound, watched the little lop-eared creatures till they had passed and stood, ears pricked, tail up till the last faint sound was gone.

At last the reassignment was made, the regiment was swallowed up in another and Tonald, in his present mood as dangerous as a wild beast, was shipped to Lyndhurst in the New Forest where Colonel Richardson had established his school for war dogs and gathered under him a faculty of dog trainers who were without peer.

In light of his history and the fact that he was broke to battle condition, an attempt was made to make a messenger or an auxiliary sentry out of him, but both tasks required that he become friendly with some caretaker. In Tonald's case it was impossible. He was a one-man dog and his man had been stolen from him by a great kilted man who had first battered him into insensibility. Aside from that hopeless love there were but two things which could stir him. One was his hatred for any and all things that met his gaze and the other, which they never discovered at that school, was love for something which never met his gaze.

Naturally he fell into the class of guard dogs. He became one of those surly, efficient beasts who were trained to guard ammunition dumps, stores of other kinds, wharfs, any place where there was a chance for theft and where caretakers of unimpeachable honesty were required. Tonald needed little training. The task in his case was to gentle him to the point where he would be safe to feed and safe to move. As for honesty, he cared nothing for ammunition or stores, but let a man or beast come within the length of his chain and there would come simultaneous roar and rush, and then wo to the creature who delayed.

So highly were the authorities impressed with his value that less than a month from his matriculation he was a graduate and on the ocean, *en route* to Canada, in a team with four Danes, a deer hound and two retrievers assigned to the guardianship of a factory where operations of great secrecy were going forward.

Fencing, human guards and flood lighting were all being tried, but secrets had leaked and now the dogs were assigned a place as outer guard. A light wire cable was stretched around the building outside the fence. On that slid rings to which the dogs were chained and the posts were so arranged that nose could not touch nose, fang not meet fang, but so that there was no gap in all the circuit which would permit man to pass.

Some time during Tonald's first night on the job he killed a quarrelsome bulldog of miscellaneous breeding who happened his way, killed him silently and expeditiously and only the fact that the body was found on his beat proved him the killer. Three nights later Tiger, one of the Danes on the other side, killed another dog and did it with noise and excitement which drew the human guards to the other side of the fence to see the fight. In the height of the excitement a silent, creeping figure, taking full advantage of a shadow cast by telephone pole and street light, worked his way toward a tiny postern gate which lay behind Tonald's beat. The slither of the ring sliding on the metal rope warned him of Tonald's rush in time to turn and meet his fate standing up.

What was the defense of a soft-handed, furtive-eyed, dope fiend of a hireling spy to a dog who had spent a year and a half going over the top with as hard-fighting a body of men as there was in the world? The ever ready gun spoke twice but the directing eye was not keyed to such speed, or else the black devil storming silently onward looked twice its true size. Both shots missed and then the slight man was down, pinned by the shoulder. A momentary flurry there was in the dark and when the guard, recalled by the shots, had turned on the floodlights the man was already still and the dog was half way back to his tiny box kennel.

That was news. An enterprising reporter caught the story on the fly and Tonald's reputation for ferocity and record as a killer both on guard and on the field of battle was given a front page. The next morning Tonald received callers. All day the curious stared at his unheeding calm. Dog fanciers criticised his points and markings, and admired those of his team mates. It was easy to say that Tonald was no Scotch collie, gazing at his nondescript coat, neither long nor silky, at his head with muzzle hopelessly broad for a collie and eyes much too far apart. It was easy to criticise his heavy forequarters and his too great size. It was easy to say all these things but the sayers had never seen the dog work at that immemorial business of the collie which has made him the dog he is, so good a dog that even the fanciers, breeding for useless points, have not yet spoiled him.

But the critics were twice to see him in action at a business he had acquired, battle-scarred and heart-broken, homeless, loveless fighter that he had become. In the morning a certain young loudmouth, overgrown for his brains, bragged:

"I don't believe he is such a terror. I think I'll just go in and pat him."

Before he had crossed the plenteously placarded white line that marked the danger area he had begun to wonder, there was that in the eye of the silent dog which inspired thought. He lagged, and only the hooting of his friends drove him on. Fortunately for him Tonald was human and erred. He struck too soon. The slack of the chain took up and checked him at the top of his spring so that his gleaming tushes instead of being fleshed in dripping throat caught in yielding shirt front and tore away a breadth of chambray and not a fool's life.

The other time was later. It was not in nature for Bull Forstner to ignore all this word of fighting dogs. The man who owned and had trained Rip, the pit terrier, Cognac, the fighting Airdale, and Wolf, the Eskimo, and who made his living by the prowess of those three champions in the pits of all the sinks of northern United States and Southern Canada where any one of his ilk prided himself on having a fighter, was not one to let any dog, no matter how honorable his record, steal any free advertising without snatching at his share.

"Wolf will show him," he told his cronies, in the room behind Pierre's bar. "You just slip out there and pick up any money that feels sporting. I'll just naturally fetch Wolf along there about five o'clock tonight and accidentally slip the leash. With all this talk there ought to be some easy money."

Sure enough, instead of falling away the crowd grew as the afternoon waned, and its make-up changed. Women were no longer among the spectators except a few who dressed rather too flashily and hung to the arms of assured looking escorts with too large sparklers in their ties and too many blue veins in their faces. Every one talked quietly and money passed unobtrusively from hand to hand.

PROMPTLY at five Forstner and his Eskimo, prick ears trimmed to the head, throat protected by heavy, studded collar, springy stride betraying the height to which his training had brought his physical perfection, came down the street, passed close to the white mark and when one brute surged against the leash to reach the silent Tonald the other slipped the end.

Suddenly as was Wolf's attack he had covered only half the distance when he was met by a black thunderbolt. Face to face, breast to breast the dogs met with a shock which threw them rearing on to hind feet; evenly matched as to weight and ferocity, they hung there a moment, Wolf snarling, a high whine like the tearing of cloth, Tonald silent, both striving with flashing jaws for a hold on throat or head but reaching instead steel-hard shoulder muscles and ripping slashes in tough hide that bled but did no more than infuriate. It was a good thing for Tonald that the dog he faced was as aggressive a fighter as he was. Square under the tether they met, and so game was Wolf that he gave not an inch, certainly not enough to cause Tonald to tighten chain and lose balance.

Ring wise, Wolf was the first to recognize the futility of direct attack on a dog who met his most savage thrust with equal savagery and provided perfect defense by intrepid offense. So quickly that the spectators had no time to gasp he dropped to his belly and snapped at sturdy forefoot. His fangs clashed on air. The foot slipped out of the gap with nothing to spare and the Scotch warrior continued the leap that saved it clear over the woolly northerner, striking as he did at the small of the saddle.

The grip was no killer such as a pit dog would have used. It was too high up for that. But it bit deep down into the loin muscles and the jerk that Tonald's seventy-five pounds of dead weight and hundreds of muscular strength gave as he landed left the Eskimo half crippled when he turned for the return rush. Again they met, breast on, and again neither gained. Again Wolf crouched, this time with earless, hate-wrinkled head tipped for lethal belly hold should Tonald try again the leap that had saved him.

Whether it be true, as Forstner claimed, that Wolf was not in condition owing to recent feeding, whether the torn loin muscles slowed him or whether he was outclassed can not be told. As Wolf dropped Tonald struck, not for the back but for the neck, close where the head joins. The teeth fleshed through hair, skin and muscle to the bone. With the clenching Tonald set himself and heaved—a convulsive fling that would have thrown a lighter or weaker dog into the air and did raise the sledge dog nearly to his feet.

One slash, a wrench and away, is the rule in the fighting of all wolf type dogs. Tonald's instinctive method of fighting was better; one slash and then another, and another, and another. Now indeed Tonald leaped over his enemy but Wolf was in no shape to take the advantage. As he whirled to the attack he was a tiny fraction of a second slow and again Tonald fleshed his fangs, clear to the gums, in the throat, safely ahead of the studded collar. From that he passed instantly to a raking slash at tender flank.

With the beginning of the fight the spectators had formed a ring which roughly shouldered back the guards. As the fight flashed through its almost instantaneous maneuvers and Wolf's fate became sure, they fairly held Forstner who would have gone to his assistance with shot-filled club.

It was a poor fight to watch. No human eye could follow each slash and guard and in less than a minute it was over. Wolf had "lost right," had met death on his feet, facing his enemy. Tonald, bleeding, torn, but fight hungry, without check turned his attention from the still twitching husky to the encircling crowd, and more than one man learned the feeling of a mouthful of ivory teeth sunk deeply in thigh or calf before they were all back in safety.

That was all very well. The keeper of the guard dogs, a soft-spoken Scot who had earned the right to approach Tonald both by force and by kindness in the school in the New Forest, tended the slashes in his coat with dusting powder and with blasphemy and the incident was supposed to have been closed. That it was not was made plain the following night.

In the wee hours, while the guards dozed trusting in the dogs, a car swept from the street down the path toward the gate. Silent, sudden and swift as a shadow Tonald swooped from his kennel, leaped for the doors, and met in the air light, tough strands that tightened all in one instant, pressing on all sides of him. He thumped to the ground, legs drawn to his body, teeth cutting at tough net cords that slipped between his teeth and refused to sever. Then he was whirled into the air, bumped on the door, and dropped into the tonneau where he was buried under rugs. There came a creak and clip as a man leaped for the tether cable and severed it with heavy cutting nippers. With roaring motor the car backed into the street and was already turning the first corner when the sleepy guard turned on the lights.

Months later, after all search had failed, Bull Forstner appeared at a little village across the border and lost among the hills. With him was a giant, off-color collie who went muzzled, and eyed all mankind with the same dour hatred with which he eyed the loaded cane in his master's hand.

Lost though Tompkin was among the hills, it boasted a dog, a cross-bred German shepherd brought home by a soldier, who was so firmly established in the minds of the countrymen as a fighter that they were willing to bet money on him against all comers.

Bull registered at the twenty-room hostelry with the cabbage smell, parked his dog in a box stall in the barn and walked down the street. With unerring instinct he turned into the local blind tiger which was masquerading as a soft drink establishment. Fearlessly partaking of the local brand of rot-gut he gained instant footing as a man of unquestionable bravery and had no difficulty in getting in touch with the owner of the alien enemy. Two hours later both dogs had been examined and were matched. Word was being passed in whispers, and carpenters who were in the know were building a ring in an abandoned barn three miles out of town in a valley selected as a spot which should be free from interference.

Now it so happened that Tompkin was in a state where there was a body of well nourished men, selected for their ability to use their brains as well as fists and firearms. Its members went by the name of State Troopers and had a most disconcerting manner of bobbing up where they were least expected and insisting that even such laws as those dealing with cock and dog fighting should be obeyed. It was in their behalf that these precautions were taken. Every one wished them well and hoped to spare them the necessity for taking the long trip over from the county seat.

IN SPITE of the lack of public advertising the field behind the barn was well filled with parked cars and the dim barn was alive with whispers at nine o'clock. Two sporting youths had provided gasoline fish spearing flares with reflectors which made the ring light as day. Bull was in one side of the ring with the big, black collie, and the German shepherd, a stranger to the setting, was straining at his leash with overeagerness. In view of the evident amateurishness of his opponent Bull passed over the preliminaries, did not demand to taste his opponent's dog—that time-honored means for detecting the presence or absence of pepper or poisons in his pelt, and contented himself with repeating the pit rule: The first dog to have a "turn" scored against him must come to the "scratch" if at any time there should come a pass. Wily old dog man, he knew that no pass would come till the very end of a long hard fight, hours of it. When two dogs are so exhausted that they stagger past each other without either making fast the end must be near and the advantage tremendously with the one who need not drag himself half way across the ring to the chalk mark which is the scratch in order to renew the battle.

Three shirt-sleeved time-keepers showed a moment in the light as they compared watches. A voice said, "Go." Both leashes slipped. The German dog roared a challenge and flung himself forward. He should have saved his breath. He was not half way to the scratch when the black thunderbolt hit him, moving too fast for equal terms. He swerved to one side and a red wound showed on his polished flank.

"Turn," yelled Bull, and the soldier answered, glumly enough, "Right." There was no sound from the spectators as they saw their champion lose the first step in the fight. Though the onlookers were still, not so the dogs. The German shepherd had the advantage of height and weight and after that first mistake he made no more. Face to face, tooth to tooth, meeting every lightning like attack with equally fast counter attack or lithe evasion, he met Tonald, by now the veteran of dozens of such affairs, at every point.

The gallery was now no longer silent. The sight of the two dogs so evenly pitted, one instant rearing together, the next whirling, tails out in effortless pinwheel, the while they feinted for advantage, had set them to yelling in spite of their agreement to the contrary.

It was a mistake if they had wished to see the fight out. The first shout attracted the attention of a little squad of troopers who had been summoned by one of the villagers who did not hold with dog fighting, and who had lost their way.

Fifteen minutes later they reached the door. Tonald's superior condition had begun to tell. The larger dog was panting, twice he had been slow and his throat showed red, though the life was still safe. Tonald, too, was marked, but it was plain there could be but the one outcome.

Without warning the large doors swung open and the head lights of a car threw the interior of the barn into high relief. "Line up there," commanded a grim voice. Instead, with a unanimity which could not have been bettered by rehearsal, every man present made a break for the door. Locust sticks downed three, six, nine of them and then the troopers themselves were trampled down and the spectators scattered through the field whence came in a moment the roar of motors and the sickling gleam of lights as car after car circled into and shot down the road.

As the soldier left the barn, well up in the pack, he had whistled and instantly Tonald had scored another turn. The shepherd left the ring with one leap and cleared the struggling figures in the door with another. Tonald, delayed a split second by his amazement, was a full six inches behind his tail.

Bull was not so lucky. When the tumult of the retreat had settled down he was one of twelve prisoners and it looked as if his style would be cramped for some time by the size of the welt over his ear.

As far as retreating was concerned Tonald had met his master. The shadow before him beat him to a closed car by yards. He failed to force his way in the one open door. The dog on the inside in such a case seems to have an advantage. Accordingly he withdrew in good order, trotted to a creek which tumbled through the hollow and, with never a backward look to find out what had become of Bull, he filled up on the sweet coolness and loped up on to the hill side.

There was no heather, but the narrow valley with its chuckling stream and the side hill with its harsh outcroppings of rock were not dissimilar to his home hills. Around the first shoulder he trotted and entered another valley. Moonlight glinted on the waves of a long, narrow lake lying in the bottom, winding on till it disappeared around another shoulder. Often now Tonald threw up his head and sniffed as though trying to recall the odors as well as the sights of his lost home. Meanwhile he stuck to his steady trot, trot and now it seemed that it was a real odor that the wind bore him. He had been angling down across the face of the moon-silvered hill and just before he reached the dark shadows of a house and orchard by the roadside he paused, corrected his course and worked upward to a thorn hedge. Through it he thrust and stood outlined in the moonlight, head up, plume waving, gazing out across the steep pasture.

SCATTERED about on the hill, grouped on the tops of the knolls, were old Macinerney's ewes, or "yowes" as he would have put it. Slowly, lest he disturb them, Tonald, the sheep dog, picked his way over the close-gnawed turf. The old tup sprang to his feet with a blat that roused the flock and brought them scurrying together in fright, heads all pointing toward this strange dog. Tonald sat him down, tongue lolling, and smiled ingratiatingly.

After a few minutes the fright passed.

With much conversation between mothers and daughters and bits of woolly advice the flock settled themselves and Tonald again approached. This time there was no alarm. If he came too close some excitable ewe would spring up, scurry madly a dozen leaps, stare wildly a dozen breaths, and again settle down.

While he still inspected the flock with the canny eye of an old drover there came to his ears a distant sound. Long drawn wailing it was with a hint of jubilation and over and under it with flourish of grace notes sang a melody as wild and eerie as the rugged country that gave it birth. To any neighbors it would have been merely, "old Macinerney's a'caterwauling again." To Tonald and to the old Scotchman in the house, mouth glued to the blowpipe, elbow clamped over the bag, drones cockily thrust up behind his shoulder as his flying fingers danced over the chaunter holes, it was a word from home, a dream of days agone.

With a glance at the clustered ewes, Tonald turned toward the buildings whence came the stirring music, leaped the gate with an easy, soaring swoop and ran full into the farm tyke. Seasoned warrior that he was Tonald had another slashed shoulder before he had brought himself out of his dream. Then he turned to and polished off poor old Joe with an ease and thoroughness which should have shamed him and possibly did. On to the byre he trotted then, passed the shadow and, caution forgotten in the magic of the pipes, was walking boldly into the open yard when a flash in the crack from a window and the whine of lead past his ear told him that he was not welcome. He put his whole mind on his running for a moment and presently faded into the woods that marked a deeply eroded gully that sliced its way to the lake far below.

Lest it be thought that the Macinerney household was unduly free with firearms it is but just to say that the sheep growers along Lake Canistie had been having their share of dog troubles. Of the twenty or more flocks no more than five had missed a raid that summer and the word had been passed, "Shoot every strange dog on sight." A dog signal had been arranged on the party telephone lines and an alarm from a raided flock brought armed men from every farm house in an attempt to head off the slayers.

In the house young Dannle Macinerney was telling his grandsire, "I missed him, blame it! I heard old Joe roar a bit ago and came to the window to see what I could see. It wasn't a minute before this big black beast stepped into the open. I don't know how I missed; seemed like he was close enough so I could spit on him."

"Ah weel. Mayhap 'tis a' for the best. This shooting strange tykes on suspeecion's no kindly way."

"Maybe not, Granddad, but we have too much tied up in those muttons out there to be taking any chances. If I catch him between my sights again there will be a hole in his ribs, just as sure as my name is Dannle."

The next morning there was a funeral, and over poor old Joe's grave Dannle repeated his promise. That day there was talk of another sheep dog but both men's hearts were too sore to pursue the subject and that night the sheep slept without guard from the house save for an occasional glance from the window where Dannle spent considerable of his worried and wrathful night. Just before morning the Saunders flock was ruined.

Dannle answered the phone, got the message and struck out into the hills to cut the path of the raiders should they swing toward Tyre. As he passed through his grandsire's flock he thought they were lying rather more in the middle of the field and more closely bunched than was their custom but the ways of sheep are past discovery so he thought no more of it. Nor did he think again of a shadow that seemed to slip along the other side of the top hedge as he approached, as soon as he had paused and convinced himself that it was hallucination.

A week passed without further alarm. That was the way of the killers. A mad debauch of slaying would precede a pause, and at that moment when it seemed that one might hope for reprieve, another wild ringing on the phone would proclaim a bit of devil's work. So it was this time. The alarm came in the small hours. Henderson's flock it was. But Shep had seen them and after a mere taste of blood his attack and the coming of the boys from the house had driven them off. Henderson was the nearest neighbor and Macinerney's lay in the direction of the flight. Snatching his gun Dannle was all for going out into the night mist, half clothed. To his surprize his grandfather not only insisted on his dressing but swathed himself in an enveloping plaid, strode along with him and picked the tree behind which they should lie.

"Mind ye now, Dannle, don't you be shooting till I says the word."

"Why not?"

"Ye'll ken in good time."

"I'll bet you have a hunch as to who they are. All right, I'll promise if you don't make me wait too long."

"That I have, Danny boy, and I'm thinking you should ken yoursel'. D'ye mind what I was doing the night the Joe tyke was killed?"

"Not unless you were punishing that old wind bag."

"Dinna ye misca' the pipes, Danny. Dinna. But whisht! What's yon?"

It was coming on toward three o'clock and the new risen moon was high enough to show the hill. The sheep were all silver in the low ground mist that was creeping down the hillside. Just above them had appeared a shadow. Now it was clear and Dannle's gun slid into position. It was the great black beast that had no doubt murdered the Joe dog. There he sat in full moonlight and gazed on the flock. It was a long shot but he could make it.

Surprizingly the old man's hand pressed down the muzzle.

"Leggo, Granddad. I can bust him where he sits. When he starts after them I can never hit him at this distance on the run."

"Let be. Let be. When he's counted them he'll gang along."

"You old fool!"

But then he stopped trying to raise the gun. Could it be he was counting them after all? It seemed so; the great head was turning as if telling them over. Now, as silently as he had come, the big dog had risen and walked over to the edge of the field, slipped through the hedge and disappeared.

"Well I'll be—"

"Dinna swear, Dannle. Dinna swear."

For another hour they lay, till Dannle was glad his grandfather had made him dress and the old man was shaking in his heavy woolen plaid. Then, with no sound three dogs slipped through the hedge where the one had gone. Terriers they seemed by the size and bent on mischief. Half across the field they were running in a group when the black dog again showed up. If they were running he was flying. Three feet to their one he went, low to the ground with giant strides.

The tup was on his feet and the ewes frantically milling. The three were not a stone's throw away and the black dog just about to join them when Dannle's gun was again leveled, aimed at a spot that black beast must cross. His finger crooked on the trigger when again the old hand pushed the muzzle down. He jerked it free but it was too late. The dogs had joined and had hit the sheep which were scattering and fleeing toward the gully bank with its long fall to cruel rocks on the bottom.

When individuals could be picked out of the flurry, one lay still and it was too dark for a sheep. As they watched, the black dog swung alongside of another terrier, seemed to merge with it in the moonlight and then passed on, leaving a twitching, thumping bundle where a moment before had been living lust to kill. The third terrier was streaking up over the hill, tail down, sheep killing forgotten in his terror at what he had seen. The big dog was racing after the flying sheep, yelping now, a high excited "yip" as if trying to talk. Dannle strove to catch him in the sights but the light and the speed spoiled that. He groaned as he watched. Half the flock had swung downhill away from the pursuer and the rest dived into the woods, the dog level with them and above. Now they came bursting out a few at a time and fled baaing down hill after their fellows. Straight toward the waiting men they came in panic flight. If they struck the wire fence at that rate there would be a shambles. Dannle sprang to his feet to try to head them back, hopeless though it seemed.

His grandsire's hand gripped his wrist and clung in spite of his jerk. "Set doun!" The old voice was harsher than he had ever heard it. "I didna think sich tykes existed. Watch, Danny, yeer seeing somethin' to tell yeer bairns."

Out of the woods came the dog, still running with that frantic speed. Below the flock he was and they swerved up hill away from him. As he passed, not a stone's throw away, Dannle, still dazed, tried to raise the gun but it was struck down and the old man growled—

"Fou', ha' done!"

Then the dog was past and the flock were on their way up the hill gradually bunching closer and swinging toward the center of the field as he crowded. As they neared the bedding place the dog, who had slowed up to their gait speeded again, shot past and swung in front of them, barking. Thrown into confusion they milled and stopped. Instantly the dog, too, stopped and sat down. An excited yearling broke for the woods; she had hardly made ten leaps when she was turned and, leg-nipped, was back in the flock. Ten minutes later the flock was bedded.

"You old fox. You knew all the time. How did you guess it? Golly! what a dog. I'd give a lot if we could get him and put him to work."

"I'm thinkin' he's put himself to work. And who wouldna guess? Dinna ye remember the night the auld tyke was killed? 'Twas the night the zanies to the village had the collie-shangie and the foreign dog they were telling was a black collie named Tonald, and na dou't fra the name and the size and the slashing manner o' work he's ane o' the black dogs o' Glenfrae. When he got here and heard the singin' o' the pipes and saw the yowes and a', he was a' for makin' his hame wi' us till ye banged at him like the great gowk ye are."

"Well, that's all right. I'll admit that you know the dog and his father before him, though that doesn't make it any the less wonderful, but how are we going to get him to the house and keep him as we must or some one will be killing him? Do you know any magic word to fetch him down?"

"No magic word, but na dou't he kens good Scots. Do ye open the yett at the foot of the field and the bars to the bught, and then pit your fowling piece awa' and stay in the house yoursel', makin' busy wi' warmin' a bit porridge wi' cow's milk. I'm thinkin' the braw laddie 'll be glad o' som'at to eat after his run."

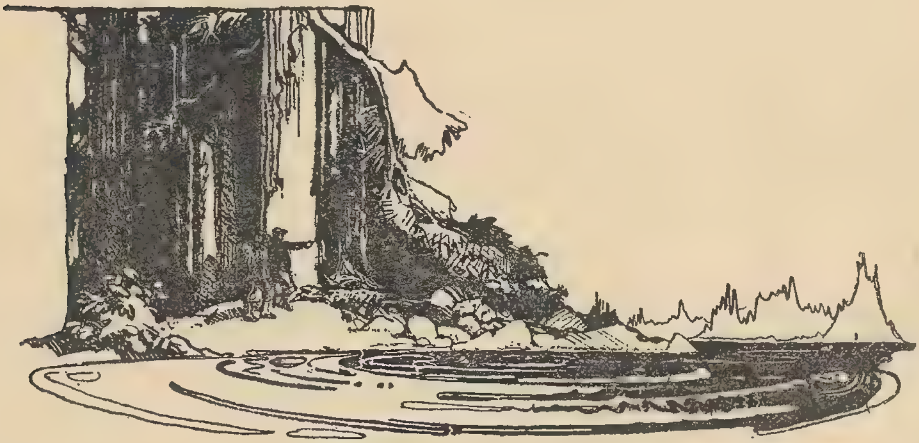
"All right. If you make good I'll hand it to you, but I think you are faking now."

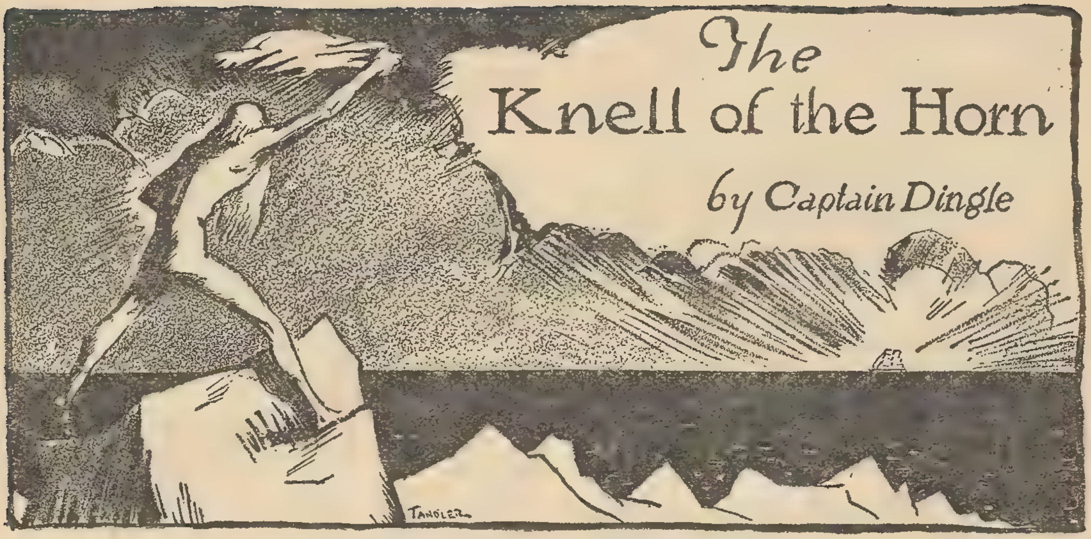
The boy threw up his hand incredulously and went down the hill, opened the gate and started across the field toward the barn. At his first move the dog disappeared.

Then the old man went to the gate and whistled. There was no sign of life.

"Come nanny, nanny, co'day co'day. Come Tonald, man. Fetch the yowes. We'll feel better the nicht wi' them in the yowe pen."

The old man called on and on. Dannle laughed to himself at the pleading tone and the apparent unsuccess. Just as he reached the barn he looked back. A column of sheep were slowly making their way down the hill. The leaders were already nearly to the gate. At the head of the procession stalked the old grandfather, wrapped proudly in his plaid, and at its tail walked Tonald, home at last from the wars.





The Knell of the Horn

by Captain Dingle

Author of "Ambition A. B.," "Evil Starbuck," etc.

A GAUNT, naked, hollow-eyed specter of a man leaped from crag to crag. He leaped with the agility of desperation, though his was the frame and the face of more than threescore years. Progressing with pitiful slowness for all his agility, he clambered half-way up the solitary island peak which was Cape Horn; and his gaze was fixed, hungrily, seaward. Far away to the southeast, pallid against a slate-colored sky on a slate-colored sea, a sail gleamed. Just one. A solitary ship. It was the first glimpse of mankind or his works the grim old Horn had seen in a year, except for the gaunt, naked castaway, who had been hurled into solitude out of the wreck of the last sailing ship to wander into those gray, bitter seas.

"Calm! A calm here! She won't be near enough to see a signal today. But there's wind. Westerly, too. She'll have to stand in this way," the specter babbled hoarsely.

Then he laughed like a crazy man and began to search for shellfish. On shellfish and rain water, caught in crevices in the rocks, he had existed for a year. All of a hard life he had spent at sea; all of it in deepwater sailing-ships; all of it voyaging around old Cape Stiff. When he was flung up out of the icy sea, sole survivor of the wrecked bark he had been master of, he knew full well that but one sailing ship remained on the wide oceans of the world.

He had painfully hoarded up the few poor rags of clothes the pitiless waves and rocks had left him, so that he might by no chance lack material for signalling when that last chance came. His body had suffered from the lack. But he knew, oh, how well he knew, that when that last deepwater sailing-ship vanished from the sea, dreaded old Cape Stiff would be a deserted, dead headland, as unknown and as unsighted by man as it was in the beginning of time itself.

There would be myths about it, and legends and stories. For a thousand ships had danced past it with laughing seas at their bows, had battled past it in stark defiance with green-gray vicious combers, snatching at their lean flanks, had dared its gales and its ice, its bitter squalls coming out of clear skies, its fog and snow and sleet. But they had gone, gone the way of galleon and galley; beaten from the seas by steam, elecricity, oil and the great Canal. Some had succumbed to the grim, old Horn itself. But progress, which had discovered the hoary headland, in turn was responsible for threatening it with oblivion.

"She'll have wind. More than she wants. Always do," chattered the old man, taking a double handful of mussels into a sheltered cranny which contained rain water.

Before eating, he very carefully unearthed from under a stone a tattered shirt and one leg of a pair of cloth trousers. They had been strongly fastened together with a seamed strip of neckband. The castaway had no pole to fly his signal from, but he had tried all ways, and he could stand on a high pinnacle and wave. It was possible, for he had achieved it, to stand on the topmost peak of all—on the crown and crest of the murderous old sentinel itself.

"She'll have wind. Here it comes now. See well to your gear, lads! The last champion of a glorious line!"

The castaway curled himself up against the bleak, cold rock and slept with the drone of the rising gale in his ears, and the shock of the breaking swell at the base of the rock to lull him.

DOWN deep, beneath the green-gray weeds, among the torn boulders from which Old Stiff raised its hoary head, the bells tolled. Silence was all but complete in the depths. There was a distant thud of sullen seas beating against the buttresses that were rooted in the heart of creation itself, mellowed by depth to a throbbing rhythm. Sometimes, carried by the subtle vibrations of profound depths, the sound of a ship's tackle came through. But chiefly it was the bells, many and varied in note and tone. For these were the bells of lost ships, dead ships.

Among wreckage they hung, and tolled. Some still held fast to complete ships, not yet crushed to fragments. Some clung tenaciously to the belfry, bell-stanchion or bracket, from which the corpse of the ship had long fallen away. Most of the bells had the company of the figureheads that had led them seven times around the world.

There was plump, ruddy *John Gilpin*. A merry, irresponsible note had that bell. *John* was growing green with age. The *Reporter's* bell had a sharp, succinct voice, but the *Reporter* had lost his tablet. It lay under three feet of gray ooze beneath the bell. Beside the shaggy rock monster that had conquered him, lay the proud *Champion of The Seas*, and his bell held place in the chorus with a fine, unsubdued old Yankee twang. *Marlboro* was there, speaking with a militant note, and *Aphrodite*, beautiful even now, whispering eternal seductions. Dusky *Madagascar*, regal *Euphrosyne*, *Argo*, *Thetis*, *Dunedin*, *Egeria*, *Glaucus*, bold pilot of the *Argo*, whom Cronus's magic herb made a god. All were there, and many another. The bell of the *Bluejacket* was there, jingling a rare salty peal, but the figurehead had deserted the ship when she burned off the Horn, and had traveled alone across two oceans to Australia, to be flung up, charred and scarred on the shores of Rottnest Island two years afterward.

The bells knew of the rising gale. They felt the deeper breathing of the surge. They heard the sullen moaning of the wind in the crags and the sibilant scouring of the seas among the half-tide rocks. And as the wind rose and the vibrations of ocean made the mighty Horn tremble, came that other sound, the sound of man, a sound the bells had waited long and with decreasing hope to hear. *Thetis* heard it, whose pretty ear was attuned to the sea.

"A year ago we heard that sound, and not since," the golden-toned bell said. "Ships grow rare in these seas."

"They'll grow rarer!" boomed the bell of the *Buffalo*, listening raptly to the far carrying voices of a sailing-ship, beset by a rising storm. The roar of seas at a driven bow could be heard, the creaking of brace blocks in the bumpkins, the chafe and chirrup of yard truss and parral, and then the nameless uproar of a tall ship's clashing gear and thundering canvas as she tacked.

"She's taking no chances. Tacked well offshore, she did," the bell of the *Buffalo* boomed on.

He was the lastcomer. Only a year ago the shaggy, horned head had pitched downward, and many men had accompanied him. They were gone now. Fishes and corruption took them. The *Buffalo* and the bell stayed on.

"We took chances a year agone," the bell said. "Here we be. Ships grow rare, says you? Rarer than you think, mistress *Thetis*. That ship whose gear you hear above is the last sailing-ship on the seas. You'll hear no sound of ship or man when that ship is done. Then we may sleep. All of us. Until the end of time."

"But we lived, friend, we lived a full life!" murmured the bell of *Aphrodite*, and the voice was like the rippling of a stream of pearls in golden sunshine. "A young shipmaster and his sweetheart sailed with me. His first ship and his first love together. They loved without limit. What were gray seas and bitter gales to them? What was the menace of the Cape? They loved. They are dead, and we are here. But they loved, even in death."

"That sounds like a good story," snapped *Reporter's* bell. "Give me their names."

"Hark!" crooned the dusky *Madagascar*.

There was no sound except the throb of the heavy surges and the slash of a rain squall lacerating the ocean's face.

"I thought I heard that ship again. Fools! Fools! A fool murdered me. You'd think he'd have a care, for I carried four tons of gold dust in my heart. Do you hear that ship?"

"What would men do with all that gold? 'Twould purchase many a royal jewel," *Euphrosyne's* stately note chimed in. "I bore silken things and ivory and jade."

"Aye, and you're as dead as the rest!" the *Champion of The Seas* interrupted rudely. "I carried grain to make men's bread."

"And you're dead too, bully *Champion*," laughed the bell of *John Gilpin*. "I ran my head against an iceberg in the dark. I was ever a venturesome rider. 'Twas strange to see the mate that night. He was just lately married and a father. I believe he was to have been my master another voyage. But I ran him against an iceberg vast as a mountain, and I saw the fish eat him under my eyes."

"A score of boys died with me. Died like men!" clanged *Marlboro's* martial note.

True bell metal that bell was, cast in Mile End.

"Like men they died, those twenty lads. I struck in a fog, and men cursed me, and cursed the captain, and cursed their Maker. But the boys stood at silent attention, waiting for their orders. All but one. One little lad, just from home, knelt and said his prayers. Brave lads all. The spite of the Horn never quelled them though it killed them."

"It beats me how you all got some story out of your wreckings," clacked the bell of *Reporter*. "All I got was plain drowned. The seas just rolled in and foundered me. And all the bold spirits I took with me were west-coast packet rats, just about ready to murder the mates. The fish refused to eat 'em!"

A chorus of musical tones greeted *Reporter's* complaint. The bells of *Egeria*, *Yola*, *Genista*, *Ailsa* and *Thetis* laughed merrily.

"Poor *Reporter!*" they sang. "Seeking stories from all others he yet misses his own, which promises best of all! Tell us, *Reporter*."

But *Dunedin*, with a hoarse, full-throated note, befitting the carrier of great cargoes, claimed attention.

"Hark! Hear the tackle of the ship!"

"Fool!" crooned *Madagascar* sleepily.

"And day has died, too!" rippled silver-toned *Egeria*.

"He needs no light who knows the way!" clanged bold *Glaucus*.

"Yet no loose-footed iceberg murdered you, friend," laughed *John Gilpin* slyly.

"Listen, will you!" twanged *Champion of The Seas*, and the clatter ceased.

The base of the rock trembled. Through the dark water the icy blast shrieked, but the shriek was mellowed to a throbbing drone by depth. The world-circling seas crashed against the dour old sentinel that had guarded the southern outposts of the western continent ever since the first dawn. That rocky peak would guard its post until the last twilight died, though men might never set salt-stung eyes upon it again.

But the seas could make it quiver if they could not beat it down. The craggy islet trembled from crest to base. The dead ships' bells tinkled to the trembling. A squall blared out of the west, cruel with icy sleet, and it whistled as it slashed up the tormented sea.

"Fool!" crooned *Madagascar's* bell.

The sound of ship's tackle was clear. The groaning of the stressed hull could be heard.

"Fool! He must be blind to venture so near!"

"He's the last one. The last one," boomed the *Buffalo*.

"I wonder if the sailors are young, and if they have loves at home," murmured *Aphrodite*, languorously.

"Hark! They tack ship!" roared *Dunedin*.

"A fool still, to stand so near," crooned *Madagascar*.

Down came the water-borne clash and thunder of a tacking ship and the shrill, half-wailing cries of grimly battling sailors. Then a moment of hush, and again the throb and drone and slash of the gale, the brief sounds of the fleeing ship.

"Not yet, not yet!" sang the bell of the *Bluejacket*, sounding queer, coming as it did from under a ledge, having nobody, as it were, but only a voice still husky from the smoke of the fire that had destroyed the ship. A long, lean eel writhed sinuously away to some hidden den. A swarm of sharp-toothed fishes cruised farther afield.

HIGH on his crag the castaway anticipated another dawn. He stared through the first wavering flush of a stormy day, too eager to feel the agonies of his cramped and frozen limbs. He gripped his precious signal rags, and his teeth, few and yellow, grinned from between blue and parted lips. No ship was in sight. Below and above and behind him was the stark rock of the cape, old Cape Stiff itself. Before him, to south and east and west, the seas rolled and roared, lashed and leaped under a blinding, biting blizzard of sleet and snow.

The mussels he had gathered before were frozen. He bit into one and hurled it toward the sea, only to see the gale hurl it back to the rock before it touched water. The man was stiff and starved. He would not quit his post of observation while that ship still held possibilities of returning.

"She'll be back," he muttered. "She won't weather old Stiff this tack. Ice, too. Ice to the south'ard. She'll tack to the north pretty soon."

The ship came into sight again in the early dusk. She was far away, and her sails were reduced to one mere strip. She seemed to make no progress, nor did she seem to recede. The keen, sea-kindly eyes of the old castaway distinguished little marks about her distant form which told him all about her.

"Ice to the south'ard," he cackled, rubbing his stark limbs with cold, hard hands, shivering, his teeth chattering, but with hope burning high in his deep, brave breast. "She tacked, and 'twas too much for her. Hove-to, she is. Master knows his business. Hove-to under lower main topsail. Swept, too, she must be. But safe. That's the thing. Safe. And on port tack, too. If she makes any headway at all 'twill be this way. About morning'll be time enough. About morning."

The old man crept to his bleak shelter again. The wind whistled around the crags, and cutting sleet whirled upon him. Wherever he crouched the sleet found him. He was hungry. But the seas were too fierce down there at the base of the cliff to permit him to search for mussels. Birds, too, had been scarce since the day before the storm. He shivered and hugged his knees closer. Sleep was not complaisant either. Perhaps he was too cold to sleep. And he could do nothing about that ship until morning, anyway. He had no means of making fire; no means of signalling the ship at night. Still, he was of that stout-hearted breed that conquered the Cape and made it a thing of little account in the world of trade. He could not sleep, he could not eat, he could not signal. He would sing. And sing he did, in a quavering, chilled old voice that, chilled and quavering though it was, bade defiance to the devils of starvation and loneliness and cold that beset him.

Flying with flowing sail over the southern sea,
Sheer through the seething gale, homeward bound is she;
Flying with feathery prow, bounding with slanting keel,
And glad, and glad was the sailor lad,
As he steered and sang at his wheel;
Only another day to wander, only another night to roam,
Then safe at last, the harbor passed,
Safe in our Father's home; safe in our Father's home.

It was a strange sound to be skirling about that scowling cliff. The very face of the rock laughed sardonically. The sobbing moan of the backwash among the crevices down at water's edge formed a chorus and drowned the astonishing sound. But it persisted. Toward the end it grew faint, but it did go to the end. And the old sailor was rewarded by kindly sleep laying soothing fingers upon his tired eyes for a few minutes of surcease.

When it should have been morning, he awoke and stumbled to his lookout. The gale roared as blatantly as ever and the snow flew more densely. It was as thick as fog, and the ship was nowhere to be seen. If she had been there, a mile away, he could not have seen her, so heavy were the masses of snow that whirled down the wind. So he closed his eyes and listened. His hearing was acute, he strained every nerve to catch the faintest sound. But for a long time there was nothing to hear, nothing except wind and sea and the sobbing suck of the breakers.

Only another day to wander, only another night to roam,
Then safe at last—

The castaway started to sing. Anything to break the monotony of that dirge of sea and storm. But he stopped abruptly, for a sound had come to him through the uproar, the sound of a ship's tackle.

THE bells clattered excitedly. Overhead the sound of seas was incessant. Sheer down the face of the rock to the ocean bed the vibrations passed. The light had never come, even with the coming of day. For a pall hung over the earth, a pall of snow and storm and cold, elemental hate. But in the vague gloom, fishes swarmed. A long lean eel writhed sinuously from some lurking place. The sound of a ship's tackle penetrated to the depths clearly.

"She's making sail to come about!" clanged the bell of *Glaucus*.

"Fools!" crooned dusky *Madagascar*. "Fools, to come so near."

"Aye, fools to heave-to!" twanged the *Champion of The Seas*. "In my day we sailed around Cape Stiff. None o' this heaving to. I was—"

"There was once you didn't sail around, friend *Champion*," chuckled *John Gilpin*.

"Let us all hope she wins clear," murmured *Aphrodite*. "There may be young lovers yet—to live."

The bells tinkled and clattered, clangored and twanged, while overhead the gear of a stressed ship clashed and thundered.

"Found himself too nigh, and could not handle the ship under the sail he hove-to under," *Bluejacket's* hoarse bell suggested wisely.

"Fools!" crooned *Madagascar*.

"Too late! Too late!" snapped *Reporter*. The thrashing above was stilled for an instant. Then redoubled, and men's voices pealed loudly.

"It's murderous! Murderous!" clanged the bell of *Marlboro*, striking the rock violently under the deep impulse of some terrific surge of the sea. Then the crash of steel upon invulnerable rock.

"She strikes! She's done!" chorused the bells.

"See! Yonder she comes!"

Down through the weedy gloom sank a vast shape. Small shapes were detached from it—to rise and to sink again, some soon, some late. Like a leviathan lying down to rest, the great ship descended. And her bell tolled brazenly.

"No more! No more! No more!"

"The last one! The last one!" boomed the bell of the *Buffalo* grimly.

"Old Stiff, you'll kill no more! You'll kill no more!" the bells jangled frantically.

"See, there are lovers! Oh, let us hope they have lived!" murmured the golden bell of *Aphrodite*.

Two figures, clasped in each other's arms, sank slowly down, and both were enveloped in the gleaming meshes of the woman's hair. Their faces were close together, and it seemed as if they smiled.

AT THE base of the crag the old castaway peered and muttered. He heard the crash; heard the rending of steel, the shouting of men. Among the boulders, weedy and green with slime, he sought for sign or trace of the ship or its men.

"The last one! The last one!" he chattered.

The icy seas washed over him. He shivered, and was blue. He was knocked down again and again. But he crawled among the rocks. Men were in that fiendish sea. Men might survive as he had survived. It took much to kill such men.

Suddenly he made a dart and a grasp, and seized a sinewy arm upthrust from the hissing surf. He gripped a wrist, and a hand like a steel claw fastened on his own wrist. He could see no face for some moments. But a bruised, beaten face, unrecognizable except that the jaw was set and the eyes gleamed unconquerably, appeared for a flash, then was gone. The castaway pulled. Setting his teeth and bracing his tottery old legs against the hammering of the seas, he pulled to save his fellow seaman from the bitter death that pulled against them both. And a sea knocked him down. Another hurled him from the rock.

Fishes and eels darted away as two old men sank among them, slowly revolving at arm's length, their hands gripped in long farewell. The fishes and the lean eels returned. The bell's mourning could not drive away the swarming creatures now.

"The last one! The last one!" boomed *Buffalo*.

"No more! No more!" tolled the swaying bell on the still restless wreck.

UP ABOVE, untroubled by the fury of the seas at its base, facing the fierce blizzard with grim, iron-hard face, Cape Horn stood as it had stood through the ages, looking out upon seas that rolled around the world before man came.

Ships and men? What were they? Old

Stiff would stand there, sentinel over the vast southern ocean, when ships and men had passed away.

"No more! No more! You'll murder no more!" sang the bells at Old Stiff's callous feet.

The Border Breed

A Five Part Story
Part I
by Hugh Pendexter

Author of "The Bush Lopers," "The Homesteaders," etc.

CHAPTER I

FIRST TRAILS

I WAS born and raised in Tennessee. Some of to-day's generation may think of it as a wild and peculiar phase of existence, although their forebears lived my life and worked with John Sevier and James Robertson—to name only two of many who builded the State that produced Andrew Jackson.

I was named for my father, Jeffry Lang, but my recollections of him are vague, as he was much away in the Chickasaw country, engaged in trade, and made Nashville his headquarters. My mother and I lived in a comfortable log-house at McBee's Ferry on the Holston, fifteen miles from Knoxville. Although only a little over two hundred miles separated our cabin from Nashville the distance might as well have been ten times as great, so far as my acquaintance with my father was concerned. My first recollections, after those of my mother, was of the coming of a stranger bringing me gifts. It must have been Christmas time. But as my father died when I was four years old, he is more of a dream-figure than a reality. Shortly after his death we moved into Knoxville, then three years old.*

The town impressed me as being very wonderful. Almost every day I would go to the big blockhouse on the river bank and admire its strong stockade. There was some one always ready to repeat the story of the massacre at Cavet's Station, eight miles below Knoxville, in September of 1793. Of a more peaceful nature was my contemplation of Governor William Blount's house at the corner of Arch and Second, the first frame dwelling west of the Allegheny Mountains. I could not conceive of a more wonderful mansion. It was two-story and had three windows in the upper story, and two windows and a door on the ground floor. From each end extended a one-story section, and the roof projected to form a protection for a long, wide porch.

By the time I was twelve years old the town boasted of two hundred wooden houses and three tanneries. I heard my elders claim our trade was brisker than it was at Nashville on the Cumberland; and brag that our shops, although fewer than those in the western town, were better stocked. We drew most of our supplies from Baltimore and Richmond, and often I heard the merchants complain when paying seven dollars a hundredweight for goods carted in from Baltimore, seven hundred miles distant.

We sent some flour, cotton and lime to New Orleans by the Tennessee river, and

---

*1794.

"The Border Breed," copyright, 1925, by Hugh Pendexter.

we would have sent much more, had it not been for the Muscle Shoals and other shallows that held up or destroyed cargoes. About the time of my father's death there was the danger of boats being attacked at the shallows by the Chickamaugas at Crow Town, Running Water, Nickajack and other red towns on the river above Muscle Shoals. It was a fear of a general Cherokee uprising that impelled my mother to move into Knoxville. She could have taken me East into North Carolina, but it was characteristic of the times to hold what one had. I was much interested when the supply-carts came in and hauled up before the stores. I was thrilled when I watched the boats start down the long water road for New Orleans, and I yearned to make the trip, just as all youngsters have felt the call of flowing water.

With perhaps not more than one in a dozen women being able to write, my mother for several years kept what in the North would have been called a Dame School, and taught sulky boys, including myself, the mysteries of the printed and written word. Looking back, I can appreciate the trouble and expense she was put to in procuring for me Noah Webster's reader, the first produced on this side of the Atlantic. The title repelled me, being to the effect:

> An American Selection of Lessons in Reading and Speaking calculated to improve the minds and refine the state of youth, to which are prefixed Rules in Elocution and directions for expressing the Principal Passions of the Mind.

When I stared at this lengthy description she must have observed my dubious expression, for she quickly reminded:

"This is an American book, Jeffry. It was printed right after we won the war with England. Before that, England printed all our books. It's an American book, my son. If you would be a good American, you will study it."

And so I assailed it, and such avidity did I develop for reading that I soon had it by heart. One Christmas my mother gave me "Pilgrim's Progress"; and I found the fight between Christian and Apollyon very spirited and about the most interesting part of the narrative. I did not understand it to be an allegory and accepted it for a long time as a literal recital of the hard times endured by a man handicapped by his name. Henry Fielding's "History of Jonathan Wild" was much more to my liking, and Goldsmith's "She Stoops to Conquer" was the third literary milestone in my young life. But overtopping all was that wonderful story of adventure, "Robinson Crusoe." My mother had told me she had a gift coming from Richmond, and I was hoping it was a gun. I recall my efforts to conceal my disappointment when the carter left a square package at the door. I remember how my mother watched me as she stood one side and waited for me to remove the brown paper wrapping. And I shall ever be thankful I was able to conceal my disappointment from her.

I started the book after supper and was lost to the world until she took it from me and said I could not burn another candle. Whenever I look back over my early youth and behold the small, entranced figure bending close to the candle, I feel like rising and saluting the shade of Defoe.

My father had left my mother a little money and quite a few debts owed to him. She realized nothing on the latter, but by keeping a school and making shirts for the Indian trade, we got along smoothly. As I grew older I fear I was not of much help to her, as at every opportunity I was stealing away to the Sign of General Washington, our best tavern, to listen to travelers' tales. Incidentally some of them complained bitterly to Landlord Haynes over the charge of five shillings a day for "man and horse." From these tavern visits I learned something of geography; that it was six hundred miles to the mouth of the Tennessee, and then thirty-eight to the mouth of the Ohio, and then the incredible distance of a thousand miles down to New Orleans.

Had a traveler arrived from, or set out for the West alone, we should have believed him very ignorant of border life, or else a fugitive from justice. All those taking the Nashville road traveled in bands of five or six; and I have seen as many as twenty-five in one party. This precaution was due largely to fear of being killed in crossing the eighty-mile wide strip held by the Cherokees and called "The Wilderness." This dangerous zone began at Blackborn's plantation, fifteen miles east of West Point, where soldiers were posted in a stockaded fort, to within thirty-five miles of our town.

Many a traveler in arriving from the West made my nerves tingle by stories of real, or suspected, dangers in passing through the uninhabited country. Much of this strip was covered by the Cumberlands and was lonely enough. Yet the first time I crossed it I met with nothing more exciting than a dozen Cherokees peacefully hunting for grapes and chinkapins, a small kind of chestnut. By this I do not mean to minimize the dangers of the times and place; for some Indians even in times of peace would steal horses and even kill, just as our lawless whites stole and killed. Throughout my life in the western country there never was a time when hostile Indians ever caused the horror such as did ferocious acts of Micajah and Wiley Harp*; or "Big" and "Little" Harp as they were commonly called.

However, before I was free to venture West, I was permitted to go as a helper to a carter returning to North Carolina. My mother's permission, unsought, overwhelmed me with delight. At that time I was going on to my thirteenth year and was strong and rugged and self-dependent, as a border boy should be. The journey was to take me as far as Jonesborough, at the foot of the mountains between the two States. I would have preferred a faring to the west or south, but with imagination's help, I anticipated much excitement along the eastern road.

I did not feel that the adventure had really commenced until we crossed the Holston at McBee's Ferry, as I had never been east of my birthplace. The carter was a kindly man, but little given to speech, except as he talked to his two horses. He could not read or write, but was very quick at figures. I talked much as we walked along, and he listened in silence. I told him the story of Robinson Crusoe, giving it in fragments, as at the first of the recital I could not tell whether he were listening or not. After the first few instalments he would prompt me by saying—

"What's that man been up to now?"

Which was a long speech for him.

Now I can see he was simple of mind and a bit confused as to my purpose. Instead of accepting the story as something I had read from a book, he must have gotten the notion I was telling it about some one in Tennessee. This idea might explain what I overheard him tell a Knoxville-bound carter as the two stopped and visited in the road a bit. I was standing apart, apparently giving no heed to the conversation when he said—

"Likely younker, but the worst liar you ever heard."

AFTER leaving the Holston, I found the plantations more numerous and nearer together. The carter told me the soil was much better than that behind us. My dreams of adventure went glimmering as we entered the more thickly settled country. Thirty miles of travel brought us to the ironworks. Here, I learned, the road forked, but with each leading to Jonesborough. My hopes revived when the carter announced we would take the longer and more lonely road, or the right hand fork, as he wished to examine the banks of the Nolachucky with an idea of making his home there sometime.

Seven miles from the ironworks found us on the river bank; and, while the carter examined the fertile soil and took note of the huge poplars and horse-chestnuts, I skirmished for treasure-trove and was elevated to an ecstasy of delight by finding some small rock-crystals. Some were fully three inches long and all were beautiful and transparent. I greedily hunted for these, although the carter said they were worthless, and I carried them tied up in my handkerchief when we resumed the journey.

We came to Greenville, situated in a slightly mountainous country and consisting of forty houses built of big beams and much like our log houses. At this settlement, alas! happened the unexpected. I was suddenly overwhelmed with a sickness for home. Gone was lure of far-faring. Low was the heart that had beaten so high. I lied to my friend, the carter, and said I was physically ill and must return home.

The carter was alarmed and sought advice from the motherly woman at whose house we had eaten dinner. She talked with me, her gray eyes searching my brown face closely. Before she was through, she had me telling about my home and mother. Then she ruffled my long hair and said to the carter:

"He isn't well enough to keep on with you. But he'll be feeling prime by the time he gits home."

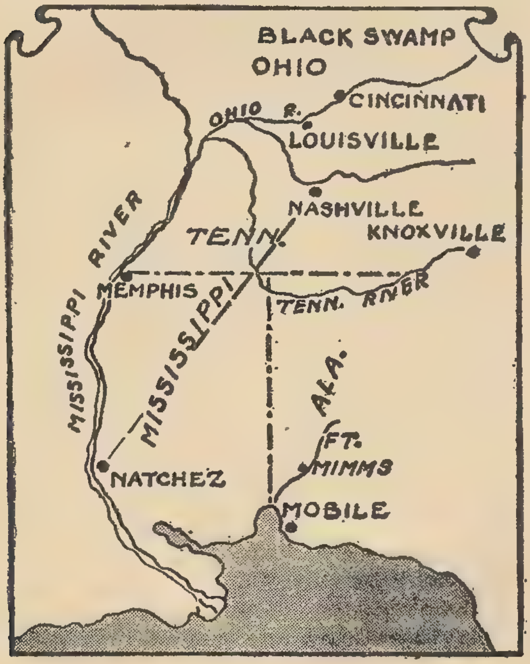
She knew what was the matter with me although I never dreamed it until years later.

The carter must have been quick to

---

*So spelled until 1826, when it appears as "Harpe."

understand, also. He patted me on the shoulder and gave me ten shillings, told me to return by the shortest route—which advice was not necessary—and we parted. Once I was heading for home I felt much better. Perhaps I wished I had stuck to my job until I had covered the twenty-five additional miles. I know that by the time I was back on the Holston and in sight of the little house where my father came home at Christmas, I was heartily ashamed of my weakness and held myself in small esteem. To save my self-respect I decided to practise deceit. I would let no one know I had quit the journey short at Greenville. To account for the fifty miles I had not traveled, I forced myself to remain two days at the Ferry, visiting with friends of my mother. Then with a light heart I pressed on rapidly. As I neared Knoxville, I repented the deceit I had planned. It would be the first time I had deceived my mother, and the carter was sure to call on his next trip and ask how I had recovered from my sickness. On entering the town I was prepared to confess the truth; but on arriving home I found there would be small chance of any one's questioning me about the journey.



As I ran up to the door, it was opened by Joel Snow, a rugged and, at times, reckless man, a trader in the Chickasaw country. He was my favorite among all Knoxville men; but as I beheld him in the doorway my heart collapsed.

"My mother? Is she dead?" I managed to ask.

Before he could answer, my mother, looking uncommonly pretty and wearing an unusually pretty gown, came to me and drew me inside the door and smoothed my hair and kissed me repeatedly, while Joel remained outside.

I gathered myself to tell her the truth about the unfinished journey. While I was wavering she held me close and whispered—

"You like Joel?"

"Of course. He's my best friend. But look what I've brought you."

And I proudly emptied the crystals on to the table.

She threw her arms around me and wept a bit and murmured:

"They're my only wedding present, Jeffy. Joel's your father now, dear."

MY STEPFATHER was in a fair way of spoiling me, had it not been for the watchfulness of my mother. He always had made much of me and now he was like an indulgent big brother. No matter what I did or said, I was right. He was ever surprizing me with little gifts and would slyly take my part when my mother held me to account for some piece of foolishness. He was inordinately proud of my "learning," and must have made himself a nuisance at Mr. Haynes' tavern when he bragged about me. Among men he was held in great respect, and none who knew him would incur his anger. With me he was all gentleness and toleration; and he held my mother in great awe. On the cultural side, he could laboriously read the printed word, but writing was an enigma. I tried to teach him with quill and home-made ink, but he gave it up, saying it made his head ache.

There was the day when he brought me a gun, a light flint-lock rifle. My mother scolded him roundly. There followed days of surreptitious practice on my part, although powder and lead came dearly. Joel was constantly reminding me:

"Jeffy, we'll not do any talking about your shooting. The little woman has her notions."

And there was the day when I invited him to walk a mile from the town to witness my marksmanship. Still ringing in my ears down throughout all the long years is his boisterous endorsement:

"By ——! Jeffy, you're a better man'n the old man. You drove center like a Long Hunter!"

And the sad memory of my mother's death. And Joel's poignant grief when he returned from a trading venture and found her gone.

After that we two were inseparable. He always believed my mother would not have died of the fever, had he been at home; and I do not believe he ever forgave himself for his necessary absence. He declared he would run no risk of losing me. With rough men he was rough, and stepped back from none. With me he was a brother, a devoted friend; and, if I would permit it, my servant. I was always right in all my early escapades. If ever a complaint was brought to him about me he would dismiss it with:

"I don't care a —— what he done. Whatever it is, it's right. Nothing that walks on feet will tell me different."

Such championship was the quickest way of spoiling me, if at times I had not recalled my mother's often repeated warning:

"Joel thinks you're perfect. Don't ever impose on him. It would be very cruel if you ever wronged him."

And he had worshipped my mother. More than once, when he believed me to be asleep, I heard him moaning and groaning before some door he had opened into his lost happiness. Being such as he was, and knowing what I did, I held back from much that was undesirable.

So it happened that at an early age I was constantly thrown into the company of men, for where Joel went I went. And, despite his adulation, some streak of common sense deterred me from showing off too much. And I made myself to keep silent and listen to the thoughtful speech of my elders.

By the time I was seventeen, the year 1807, we two had traveled much over western Tennessee. Joel had made some money in the Indian trade and now had a mania for taking up wild lands as the quickest way to build my fortune. He was much given to saying:

"When I find a fat chunk of land, I'll lay a warrant on it. Then you can be a gentleman for life, Jeffy, and not give the path to anything that walks on feet."

There was much talk about John Rice and his grant covering a large area overlooking the Mississippi. As I never had seen the mysterious river, I was glad to go with Joel to the Fourth Chickasaw Bluff.*

It was a memorable day for me when I stood on the site of the ancient town of Chisca and looked down on the rolling flood. Two hundred and fifty-seven years prior to this, my first sight of the great river, Hernando de Soto had stood there and stared across at the canebrakes and swamps and unexplored wilderness of the Arkansas country.

The river affected me tremendously. I was afraid of it, a sullen monster forever snatching away the banks in huge mouthfuls, and tearing out mighty trees, with every fresh leaping out of bounds and coursing inward until stopped by the ridges. It repelled me. And yet I yearned to see more of it, to follow it far down into the South Country, as the country from Natchez to the Gulf was called.

Joel saw in the river only a flowing road to New Orleans. He prosaically informed me that the huge timber-rafts had swept out many of the dangerous "sawyers," or rooted snags. And he added that the stretch from the mouth of the Ohio to Natchez was more dangerous, because of these partly sunken trees, than was the remaining distance from Natchez to the mouth.

After we had stared our fill, or at least Joel had, he called my attention to Fort Pickering, reached from the river sixty feet below by one hundred and twenty steps, each a huge, squared log. My interest was quickly aroused by a prepossessing young soldier parading before the gate with a bayonet on his shiny gun. My fancy took a new flight— I could wear a soldier's finery and carry it well.

"You opine you'd like to go soldiering, Jeffy?" anxiously asked Joel.

His quickness to read my mind startled me. While I hesitated, before confessing the idea appealed to me, another trim and dapper young man, a Zachary Taylor, at the foot of the ladder leading to the Presidency of the United States, appeared on the scene and barked an order which the sentinel instantly obeyed.

"I'd never like being a regular soldier," I told Joel.

"Good land! I hope not!" he cried in great relief. "If you did then I'd have to be one. But, Jeffy, you'd fight your bigness if Spain, or England, or France tried to tromple on us?"

---

*Memphis.

"My bigness and to the death," I told him. "And I'd be a good soldier as long as the fighting lasted. I'd do that much just to please you, even if I wasn't an American."

"Dear lad!" he huskily mumbled and turned away. He walked toward the fort, gesturing for me to follow him.

Some forty Indian warriors had filed out on the open grass ground before the stockade and were dropping down to rest. They typed freedom and interested me more than the spick and span disciple of routine inside the stockade. I knew them to be Chickasaws at a glance, for Joel had taken me down the old Chickasaw Trace more than once, and I even had picked up a working knowledge of their language. After we had greeted them, Joel talked aside with their leader, a grotesquely painted man with several long feathers in the back of his hair and wearing a big tin breastplate made in the shape of a new moon. From his ears hung large tin earrings.

Up to the time Joel dropped down beside this man he had never been aught but a genial, easy-going, jovial companion. The old Joel never left that brief exchange of low-spoken confidences. It was a new Joel that came to me and placed a hand on my fringed sleeve and hurriedly led me away.

As we retreated from the fort, his hand still clutching my arm, I remonstrated.

"What are you up to? Where are we going?"

"Going? —— knows! Away from here. Don't talk, Jeffy. Not now. I've heard some mortal bad news."

I waited for him to continue, but he clamped his jaws and, after a question or two, I discovered he had secrets he was loath to impart even to me. Rice's land grant was forgotten. Still dumb, he hurried me to the Nashville road and our return to that town was in the nature of a flight.

I marveled and lamented at the changed appearance of my friend. Where always there had been merriment and good-nature was silence and a nervous trick of shifting the gaze from side to side, as if we were in hostile Indian country. Where there had been a love of singing and of roaring recital of some Revolutionary War ballads, or a local "lonesome" song, there was stealth and a furtive staring back over the road as if he feared pursuit.

I could imagine only some red peril; and yet the Cherokees had ceded to the United States all lands north of the Tennessee river two years before, while the Chickasaw Bluff treaty, permitting the nation to build a wagon-road to Natchez, was seven years old.

"What is it, Joel? What tribe is on the rampage now?"

"Good land! It ain't Injuns. I'd laff at that," he hurriedly corrected. "I heard some bad news. Never mind what, Jeffy. What you don't know never will hurt you."

I INSISTED a danger shared was a danger cut in two; that bad news for him was bad news for me. But he would not talk. From that day on the Bluff he was a changed man. If anything, I loved him more than ever. In discovering he was in trouble I washed some of the selfishness out of my soul. While he would not confide in me, he became a bit dependent on me. He asked my advice in small matters. I often detected his wistful gaze fixed on my brown face. One of the most striking changes in him was his sudden distaste for taverns. Heretofore a return from a long journey was marked by jollifications at the several roadside inns. He stood his liquor well and was most popular with all boon companions. He ever was first with song, or jest, with challenges to a friendly rough and tumble fight, or a shooting match. And never in his cups had I seen him quarrelsome, or known him to say or do anything that would shame him on the morrow. Those tavern days held pleasant memories for me and had left no hurt.

And it all was so incomprehensible, this mysterious fear now riding him, and keeping him away from conviviality and wayside gatherings. Throughout the return to Nashville the program remained the same. When about to approach a tavern for a night's lodging he would halt at some distance and request—

"S'pose you sly ahead, Jeffy, and scout 'em a bit."

This extraordinary precaution taught me that he feared meeting some one, or something unexpectedly. I would visit the tavern and quickly make a mental note of every person there and return with an exact description. Then he would draw a deep breath, square his shoulders and say:

"Let's be going in. Time to sleep."

Once inside four walls, he always selected a position in a corner, where he could see the windows and door; and the time had passed when he would carelessly abandon his rifle. As I loved him and pitied him, I was desperately curious to learn the cause of his unnamed trouble so that I might be the more able to help him. But I could not open that closed door and drag his fear into the sunlight. I tried once, just before we reached Nashville, and he groaned and lifted a hand in protest, and begged:

"Don't, Jeffy! It's my load. No one can carry it for me. It might fall on and crush the man who tries to help."

"I'll risk it. It can't crush me," I insisted.

"No, no. You'll hurt me if you go to prying."

Heretofore he had been indifferent to what the world was doing. His life was bounded by the Clinch and the Mississippi; by the Kentucky line and the Indian country in the south. Now he developed a keen interest in any of the weekly gazettes we came across. When he could secure one of these newspapers we would retire to the deep woods, or a back room if we were at a tavern, and I would read aloud to him. Nor would he be satisfied until every word was read, even to the notices of runaway slaves, market prices, everything. After the small sheet was finished he would relax and would appear to be a bit more at ease for several days. In vain I endeavored to guess what it was he feared, or wished to find in the newspaper.

At Nashville he avoided his favorite tavern on Broad street, and we took up quarters in a trader's cabin on the east side of the town. The owner was an old friend and, on finding him absent, Joel did not hesitate to take possession.

After our first supper in town he fell to brooding and even forgot to smoke. I surmised he was wrestling with a new problem, and it made my heart ache to observe how worry or fear had thinned his tanned face. In the morning he sent me out to scout and bring back any newspapers I could secure. If he left the house that day it was during my absence.

That evening he suddenly began:

"It's like this, Jeffy. We ain't afraid of any thing that walks on legs—if we can see it. Wild tigers can't scare us. Wild men can't scare us, or make us budge. But if ever you get into the cypress swamps in the South Country you'll have to keep your eyes open for moccasin snakes. You'll find yourself getting scared of 'em because it's hard for the eye to pick 'em out. They'll be lying on a cypress knee just above the green-scummed water. You stick out your hand to steady yourself, the water being up to your waist, and first thing you know your hand's almost resting on one of them moccasins, and he's got his upper jaw thrown back so's it almost rests on his neck—just waiting. You won't get stirred up over the 'gators much, after you get used to 'em. But you'll never get used to a moccasin, waiting on a rotten log or cypress knee. Every time you find yourself close to one of them you can feel your hair turn white. There's no getting used to a moccasin. Take him out in the open and smash his head and think nothing of it. But you can't get 'em out in the open. So, Jeffy, when you get near one of those critters, you skeddadle."

I waited to discover the connection between these remarks and our situation. He fiddled with his pipe for a few moments, but did not light it, and added:

"So that's the way it goes. We ain't scared of anything we can face. But the moccasin in the swamp, the blow from behind in the darkness—well, that's a big lot different. While I'm sitting here and thinking you go out and scout a bit. Probably you'll look into the taverns and see who's there. And you may get hold of a newspaper so' we can have a bit of reading."

Nashville at this time was the oldest and most important town in western Tennessee. It was scattered over some thirty acres with the bare rock cropping through the thin soil in many places. There were a dozen or more fine houses of brick and perhaps a hundred and fifty of wood. The twenty-odd shops, drawing their supplies from Philadelphia and Baltimore, made a smart showing. And there were goods from New Orleans, laboriously brought up by water. To look into a shop, and to know the sources of the stock, gave one a knowledge and an interest in far-off places. When we bought an article we knew where it was made, how much it cost to land it in the shop, and the dangers incidental to its carriage.

I went scouting to please Joel, but found it tiresome. I relaxed and enjoyed the shops and the people in the streets. I found myself regretting the old life, when Joel and I were free to shoot turkey and grouse on the outskirts of the town, and to find beaver and bear by going a trifle farther. And where I was wandering aimlessly, staring at merchants' goods, Virginia men in 1769 had found large herds of buffalo grazing. With free lodgings, our living would cost us nothing if I were free to leave my friend and shoot game.

Finished with the shops, I looked into places of entertainment. Practise had made it possible for me to record almost at a glance the company in a barroom, their dress and physical characteristics. In Broad street I entered a tavern to get a drink of water. Oddly enough water was hard to come by, as the entire town had to procure it at some distance. The rocky foundations of the place discouraged well-digging.

I quenched my thirst from a pail on the bar and turned away. In approaching the bar I had taken note of several Indian traders, the local people, and a party of three gentlemen, whose dress and manners told me they were from the seaboard. A trader drinking with friends in a corner recognized me, and called out:

"Where's your step-pap, Jeffry? Ain't seen old Joel for a coon's age."

"He's around somewhere," I replied.

"You two usually hunt together. Joel Snow ain't one to miss good company. Ain't got religion, has he?"

As I was assuring him Joel was in excellent health a figure on a settle stirred. I would not have noticed this man as he was enveloped in a cloak and was lying his full length on the settle with his back to the lights. As it was, I only glimpsed a tall figure and long arm picking a crutch from the floor. He came almost to a sitting posture and then sank back and pulled the cloak over him again. He impressed me as being tall and powerfully built and carrying one shoulder much higher than the other. Afterward, I remembered that his head inclined to the right and seemed to rest on his shoulder.

After a few more words with the trader, I secured a copy of the weekly paper and returned to Joel.

* * *

ON REACHING the house I found it dark except for a faint glow from the fireplace. I rattled the paper as I entered and Joel quickly hung blankets over the two small windows and lighted a candle, and prompted—

"Well, Jeffy, you scouted them a bit?"

"Travelers, traders and townspeople," I generalized. Then I added a brief, yet accurate description of all he did not know by name. In conclusion I said, "And one cripple with a crutch."

He felt relieved, as was shown by his lighting his pipe. Seating himself at the table, he nodded for me to commence reading. I began on the first page, left hand column, and went through the various items. He was nodding complacently when I turned the page. Half-way through the second page I came to a bit of news which reflected the troublous times of the last ten years. It was brief but suggestive, and of more interest to me than the notice of arrival of fresh goods, or even of men organizing a journey down the Cumberland and on to New Orleans. I read—

"A gentleman writes us from Natchez that Dancer, one of Sam Mason's men, is said not only to be alive but is even now in Mississippi Territory—"

The sound of Joel's pipe hitting the floor, followed by his sudden movement to secure his rifle, interrupted me. As I turned and stared at him I beheld a new, a feral light in his eyes. I had never seen the like before.

"Go on!" he whispered.

"What's the matter?"

"Not much. Except ——'s to pay. Read!"

And I read, with him standing there with his rifle cocked, his ear to me, his fierce gaze sweeping the curtained windows.

"Our correspondent, for whose credibility we vouch, says it is now believed that Dancer has been living in the Creek towns or New Orleans instead of filling a grave on Stack Island. The gentleman insists he saw him recently in Natchez. He promptly gave the alarm, but Dancer had vanished by the time search was made for him. In talking with us he said he was positive of his identification, as the man passed between him and a lighted window. He recognized him at once by the peculiar lift of the right shoulder and the bending of the head to the right."

I dropped the paper and stared dully at Joel. Without shifting his gaze from the windows he snapped—

"Go on!"

"But that's the cripple I saw at the tavern!" I cried.

"The cripple!" exclaimed Joel; and he pinched the light from the candle. "A cripple? By Judas! He's here! He's caught up with me at last!—I might 'a' looked for some such game. In the old days he'd sometimes tie up his foot in rags, like it was hurt. That was when Mason's gang was working on the Natchez trace and he was the decoy."

"But who is he? Mason is dead. John Setton and James May, his slayers, are dead—hung three years ago."

"Setton was Wiley Harp, or Little Harp," muttered Joel. "And Dancer is just Dancer, the Hell-wolf—and he's in Nashville."

"Then he knows you are here. I've betrayed you," I whispered. "The traders called you by name and asked where you were. And I told them you were around somewhere."

"Never mind. I'll work fast. You stay here while Joel Snow dumps a big load of trouble from his back. He doesn't know I know he's here. He's a moccasin. I've caught him in the open. And we ain't scared of anything on legs that we can face."

And it was wonderful to behold the absence of all depression and to see the old confident light shining in his eyes. His grim smile contained much of satisfaction as he picked up a butcher-knife and thrust it through his belt without bothering to sheathe it. From the wall he took down a trade tomahawk, but he did not take his gun.

"You stay here, Jeffy. I'll be back mighty soon. Thank God I've got him in the open!"

With that, he cautiously opened the door a crack and listened for a moment, and then slipped out into the darkness. Carrying my rifle, I stole after him, but lost him as he darted between two houses. I did not waste time in seeking to follow him, as I knew he would make for the tavern. I hastened to Broad street, thinking to arrive ahead of him and capture or kill this man who had brought fear to my friend. I halted at the side door to steady my breathing, for my excitement was high. My best friend had feared a lurking foe, a moccasin that strikes without warning. The terrible notoriety of Big and Little Harp, of Samuel Mason and his band, had obscured this high-shouldered wretch, who by some strange coincidence had crossed the quiet, peaceful path of Joel Snow.

Opening the door a foot, I stepped inside. The room was as I had left it, except that the cripple was gone.

"Back again, Jeff? Why didn't you bring Joel?" loudly called the trader.

Without answering him, I retreated through the door, my heart pounding like a trip-hammer. Joel was afraid of nothing he could see and fight. He was convinced this Dancer was terrible in stalking a victim. Therefore I was convinced. Knowing nothing of the man until this night, I was accepting him at Joel's estimation; and already the man was at his deadly business of hunting my friend. Even as I left the tavern I believed the two men were playing a ghastly game of hide and seek among the houses of the town, and by Joel's own telling, the Dancer had no peer at this sort of work.

I stole among and behind buildings, practising all my woodcraft so as not to alarm sleeping citizens. For more than an hour I prowled about, ever listening for a stealthy step to proclaim the proximity of my friend or foe. I had no notion how the enmity sprang up between the two. Joel had expected this man to hunt him down and strike from behind. And Dancer had come to Nashville. I wasted no time in attempting to fit the puzzle together. I only knew my friend's peace of mind, if not his life, depended on the death of Dancer. So I hunted for him and prayed for a chance to kill him as I would a moccasin.

Finally, finding myself behind our cabin, I went to the door, thinking Joel might have exhausted his search and had returned to cover. The room was empty, and my heart grew cold as I visioned Joel already slain. I threw some dry wood on the coals and tried to form some plan of action. I could arouse the citizens and start a band of men searching. Deciding this was the best move to make, I started for the door when the flaring fire brought me to halt. A sweeping glance told me Joel had been there. His rifle and blankets were gone. Pinned to the wall by a skinning-knife under the pegs where the rifle had rested was a piece of brown paper.

I snatched this down and held it to the firelight. Crudely printed with a charred stick was the message:

> Jefy bad to bee with me. i missed him. goodby.
> —Joel

Not since my mother's death had I known such sorrow as these few words brought me. My best friend, living in awful fear of the menace he believed was stalking him, had fled. His one thought was to get away from me so I might not be dragged into the danger that dogged him. For several minutes my mind was blank. Then I endeavored to reason.

I did not believe he had taken to the Natchez road. He would not go south, as that would be playing into Dancer's hands. Joel was direct in his thinking and I endeavored to put myself in his place. I decided, if I were Joel, I would take the Knoxville road and either leave the man behind, or decoy him into a region where I would have him at a great disadvantage and could force him to show himself in the open.

It was all chance and, more desperate than hopeful, I took my blankets and rifle and gained the Knoxville road. A mile from town my head cleared and I realized the danger of softly coming upon either Dancer or Joel. If I was ahead of Dancer, there was every reason why I should wait for him to come along. If he was ahead of me, I must wait until daylight to stalk him. He would not look for danger from behind. I halted beside the road and waited for the high-shouldered man to come along. When the east began to redden I ran swiftly. I passed one of the small black boards, which were nailed to trees every three miles to indicate to travelers the distance they must go to reach Nashville, and was suddenly halted by a low voice calling:

"Step aside, Jeffy. I feared you'd trail me."

I ENTERED the growth and found him crouching low, his rifle cocked.

"You didn't oughter done it," he mumbled, never taking his gaze from the road. "It's my trouble. You mustn't mix up in it."

"You went out to kill that man and yet you ran from him."

"That's right. He'd quit the tavern. I knew he was looking for me. I hoped he'd follow me out here, where I'd out-Injun him. Yes, I run when he ain't in the open, just like I'll jump back from where I think a moccasin's hid. When I looked through the tavern winder and see he was gone, I knew he was trailing me. I'm a stand-up fighter. I ain't scared of nothing on legs. You know that, Jeffy. But that Dancer! He's a hellion!"

All the time he was talking his eyes were on the road.

"He's deadlier'n any snake you ever hear tell of. If a moccasin bit him, the moccasin would die. He's master cunning. He's led more'n one poor traveler into Sam Mason's grip. He can dress and act like a fine gentleman. He can enter a church and preach a mighty good sermon against sin. If his shoulders was even he'd be the most dangerous man in the country. Mason never got caught so long as he let the Dancer do his thinking. See how he made folks think he was dead on Stack Island, fifty-five miles below Walnut Hills, and him with his high shoulder living in New Orleans or among the Injuns. Stack Island is most washed away now and it's only a chance that let folks know he isn't at the bottom of the Mississippi.

"Mason had men posted up and down the Ohio and Mississippi valleys. He had Dancer as lookout at Natchez. It was Dancer who got him to get a passport from the Spanish, and who kept him from robbing and killing on the west side of the river, so's he could always scoot across and hide up there when it got too hot on the American side. ——! I'd give five years of life to have found him in the tavern!"

"It was my fault," I groaned. "The trader asked about you and I said you were near."

"How was you to know? I oughter told you about him after the Chickasaw told me he was coming up the Natchez road. But what's worse'n anything else, Jeffy, is that you're in it now. He's as bad at heart as ever Big Harp was, and as sly and cunning as the Devil. Anything that belongs to me, even a hound-dawg, he'd kill."

"Then that's settled. You'll never try to run away from me again?" I asked, feeling a great relief.

"No sense in it, Jeffy. Never again."

"Joel, I don't believe this man is such a hard customer to corner as you say he is. To hear you talk one would think he's the devil with horns and hoofs."

"He is. Fits him to a T, Jeffy. You put it better'n I can, cause you use your head and have a bag of talk that sounds like a school-master. Now listen. Get out of the notion of thinking I'm talking foolish. Dancer is the queerest man you ever heard tell of. He won't strike when there's risk to himself. Never! But he's worse'n any Injun you ever heard of when it comes to remembering a grudge. He's just b'iling pizen till he can even up a score. And he's got a grudge against me, Jeffy."

"Joel, tell me all. Nothing you say can make my feelings for you change a bit. How did you come to meet such a man?"

For the first time he spared me a glance, sharp and piercing as a knife point.

"Thank you hearty, Jeffy. But it ain't as bad as that. I'd never married your mother if I'd had any dirt on my soul. I fell in with him at Natchez, when he was lookout for Mason, and Anthony Gass was handling the goods Mason stole from flatboats and travelers along the Natchez road. No one ever suspected either man. When Dancer plays a part, he's that part. He was a jolly, drinking, singing fellow when I first met him at Mickie's tavern. He was spending hard money right fast. He was letting on to be a dealer in wild hosses fetched in from New Mexico. Said he sold a lot in New Orleans. Got fifty dollars apiece. Had a notion to fetch some to Natchez. He kept talking this but never fetched any in.

"Then two things happened that's the reason why we are hiding here with a cocked rifle. I ate and drank with him one night when he showed quite a lot of gold. Next morning the body of a murdered Kentucky trader was found behind a drinking place at the river landing where the Kentucky boatmen stop on down trips for a carouse. These boatmen said the trader brought a bag of gold, and described it. The bag had an eagle worked on it in gold thread. The night before I had seen such markings on the bag Dancer pulled out in paying a tavern score. I didn't know what to think. I was younger'n I am now and wanted to believe all right. I went to a storekeeper I could trust and told him all. He talked with a man from New Orleans, and the man said that no such person as Dancer ever brought any wild hosses into that city. Then I put a dog on my trail by carrying my story to the law-officers.

"They locked Dancer up and found some of the dead man's property on him besides the bag. I gave evidence against him. The night before he was to be hung he broke loose. Now you know all about it. He tried for me twice, shooting from cover. I never had any peace of mind till I heard he was dead and buried on Stack Island."

I thought it over and finally said:

"We can't stay out here any longer. Chances are he's looking for you somewheres else, or is running away down the Natchez road. Probably he's more scared of what you'll do than you're scared of him."

"Scared only when I can't see him," he muttered.

"So I believe we should travel a bit. You've always said you'd take me to Kentucky. There's nothing to hold us here. Let's travel north."

His face became transfigured, and he admiringly cried:

"That comes of having book-learning. My fool head is empty. Of course we'll go to Kentucky. I ain't been there for a long time. Dancer won't go there for fear he'll see Big Harp's head stuck up in a tree near Henderson. If Dancer wa'n't such a coward he wouldn't be so dangerous. We're within a mile of the Kentucky road to Harrodsburg and Louisville. We'll lose time if we go back to Nashville, let alone running the risk of having a gun bang at us from behind a tree."

Thus it happened that, because of a villain's arrest in Natchez years back, I was now setting forth to see a new country; a land that had fascinated me because of the tavern tales told in my hearing by the last of the Long Hunters.

As we were striking through the mile of timber filling the crotch of the northern and eastern roads Joel suddenly halted and earnestly reminded—

"You understand, Jeffy, we don't run from nothing on legs if we can see it."

But there was small dread of Dancer in my mind as we continued our journey. Kentucky was ahead, and the beautiful Ohio; the land of Boone, the hunting and fighting ground of rival Indian claimants. The red men no longer sealed the Ohio. Mad Anthony Wayne had repaired the damage done the Ohio country by Harmar's and St. Clair's failures. Flatboating was at the peak of its glory and the course of immigration was steadily setting to the West, and the glamor of that golden age was calling to me.

CHAPTER II

THE McGINS

SOME forty miles northeast of Nashville we crossed the Kentucky line; and, as if we had passed behind a stout barrier, Joel ceased to act like a hunted animal and almost became his old self. When we were passing through the Barrens, and I would have liked tarrying to enjoy the grass meadows, my companion lamented the lack of cover and displayed some of his former uneasiness. Unless a man be hiding, there were trees a-plenty; a scattering of Virginia cedars, two-leaved pines and black oaks. Our only stop, except to rest, was to examine a big buffalo wallow.

After we had passed through the narrow valley of the winding Green River, Joel became more talkative and told me much he had learned about the country on former visits. Of special interest, I remember, was his talk about Harrodsburg, the oldest settlement in the state, for my mother often had regaled me with stories of the Kentucky pioneers and about James Harrod's building a cabin on the site of the town in the year of Lord Dunmore's War, and of his making it into a fort the following year while the colonials were testing their spirit in fighting the British around Boston. Harrod's defiance of the fierce Shawnees had ever appealed to my imagination, and I and other boys had made a game of it. Even now I can follow the dim path back to childhood and find myself in the little house at McBee's Ferry and hear my mother's voice telling the old tales to the accompaniment of a wild winter night's howling down the chimney.

Joel, while much improved, was insistent on breaking our trail. He would not put up at taverns. Although we looked on Harrodsburg and its forty houses, scattered in a hit or miss fashion, we did not enter the town, but pressed on and made a camp on the edge of General John Adair's fine plantation.

I would have called at the house, as General Adair was one of my heroes and came to Kentucky from South Carolina, whence my parents migrated to make a home in Tennessee. He had figured in some of my mother's stories and he had led the Kentucky volunteers in St. Clair's blind expedition. But Joel would have no visiting. He insisted we adhere to his plan of leaving no trail. Every family and tavern-keeper put the same questions: What's your names? Where are you from? Where are you going? What's your business? He insisted a blind man could trace us, did we give honest answers. Joel did the misleading, and my respect for his imaginative powers greatly increased as I listened to his various explanations. I only had known him as a direct, simple, honest man. Now my admiration was aroused by his newly-developed gift for lying. And despite his anxiety I fancied he was rather proud of his talent.

I was his son. I was a runaway boy he was taking home to Scuffletown on the Ohio above Green River. I was a chance traveling companion, bound for Marietta. Our names were many, but never our own. We hailed from everywhere except Tennessee. We were bound for the Ohio to engage as boatmen. We were going to Pittsburg. We were to take up bounty-lands on the Indian, or north shore, of the Ohio. I was positive that with so much misleading information left behind us, our trail was smothered and that an enemy would get the impression a small army of men and boys had passed through the country.

I complimented Joel as we camped snug in the wide, flat tract surrounding the Adair plantation. My words pleased him; but after the first glow of pride he dejectedly reminded:

"Fact is, Jeffy, there's only two of us and always two of us. And no matter what cunning stories I tell we're always a man and a younker. That ain't enough to fool Dancer. However, he won't come into these parts, and if he does, we'll be swallowed up once we reach the busy river."

So we did not call at the Adair house, where the general and his gracious lady would have made us welcome. We glimpsed it as we continued our journey, pleasingly situated among the wide fields of corn and wonderful peach orchards. We furtively made our way to Louisville, with Joel lying extravagantly when he deemed it necessary.

My mother had told me of the beginnings

of Louisville; of how George Rogers Clark's pioneers in 1778 had made homes on Corn Island. But I had learned nothing from her to prepare me for the business activity and commercial importance of the town. Nor had my Tennessee friends been given to boasting about it. We were concerned with singing the praises of Knoxville and Nashville and in proclaiming ourselves superior to any State in the Union. This local prejudice at times was carried to the point of physical combat when a traveler ventured to challenge our claims. So my picture of Louisville had remained unchanged: Primitive pioneer conditions. And the town burst upon me as a marvel.

We entered the half-mile long street and walked in the middle of the road. My neck soon ached from continual turnings and stretchings as I gaped at the compactly built houses, handsome and of brick. Some of these were three stories high and looked to be flat-roofed because of the parapet walls. Joel reluctantly admitted it was the finest town in the western country with the possible exception of Lexington.

I lamented the lack of such handsome structures in Tennessee and he eased my mind by saying:

"Any one can pile bricks up into a big house if they have the time. But down home we're too busy building up fine men, like what you'll be, Jeffy, to waste our strength just now in anything else. It's men, not houses, that counts."

We entered the market-place and were admiring the two-story stone courthouse when a bell on a roof began clanging violently and I whirled about, thinking it must be an alarm of some kind. Joel explained it was only a tavern bell, calling folks to dinner. This reminded me I was hungry, but Joel disappointed me by refusing to enter. He said:

"Time enough to eat in such places after we're sure our trail is broken. But you go in somewhere and buy some food and find me at the lower end of the road on the river bank."

It happened to be a Wednesday, one of the two weekly market days, and there was much to select from. I bought some smoked ham and some corn bread and hastened down to the river. I discovered the town was situated on a slight slope and that the descent to the river was sufficient to permit some of the citizens to enjoy gardens, quaintly formed by buttressing up the lower end with stonework. Especially pleasing were these gardens on the grounds of the two Buttets, and that of Doctor Gault at the upper end of the town.

I went down to Bear Grass creek, a placid little harbor for the town, and found it crowded with flats. There were arks and broadhorns, keels, barges, and Orleans boats. They had driven from the river, and had taken the place of, pirogues, skiffs and the batteaux, so far as freighting was concerned. And there were some visionary people who predicted a new kind of a boat, made to go by steam, which would in turn drive all the flats from all the waters of the United States.

Joel was one of the few practical men I knew who did not deride the notion. But while practical, there was, at times, much of the wondering child in Joel. Because of this credulous strain, I looked on him more as a big brother than as a stepfather. Many men, lacking the rudiments of an education, are suspicious and will take nothing beyond the ken of their five senses for granted. Joel was the opposite type, and was as speculative as a child in considering the future. His fancies afforded him huge enjoyment before the friendly Chickasaw told him the disquieting news on the Chickasaw Bluff. Sometimes at night, when we were camped, he would wonder for hours if the stars were inhabited, and what kind of beings they were. It would not have surprized me very much to have heard him insist human beings would fly through the air some day.

He was not at the creek and I wandered up the river bank and found him gazing across to the Indiana shore.

"Don't say nothing. Just look around," he greeted as I dropped down beside him.

And I stared for minutes in silence. It was my first glimpse of the river, and had I not seen the Mississippi I would have pronounced it the largest waterway in America. The panorama was much more pleasing than the view I had had of the Mississippi. We were at the southwest end of a straight six-mile stretch, or reach, and for this distance we saw the river rolling down, speckled with various kinds of boats. Across the flood was Jeffersonville, a small, tidy settlement of some thirty houses. Directly before us sunken rocks and small islands stretched across the river and formed rapids, or, as we called them, the "Falls" Joel informed me the channel was on the Indiana shore with a depth of six feet and with a width of not more than twelve or fifteen feet on low water. He called it the "Indian Shute," and added that, with the current flowing twelve miles an hour, there were pilots stationed above the falls who would steer the boats down to Shipping Port,* two miles below us.

IN THIS connection he dwelt at length on river conditions a few years back, when the descending boats had to take their chances with the river-pirates at Cave-in-Rock, twenty miles below Shawnee Town, and with those lurking at the mouth of Cache River. If they escaped these evil rendezvous there remained Stack Island and other danger points in the Mississippi. He touched on his own trouble when he said that Samuel Mason, leader of river-pirates and the bandit band infesting the Natchez road, first saw the Cave-in-Rock when he floated down the river as a soldier under Clark in the summer of 1778.

A village on the Indiana shore at the lower end of the rapids was new to Joel, but from a passer-by we learned it was Clarksville, named after General Clark. Our informant said it would take the river trade away from its neighbor, Jeffersonville.† Now the view was halted by the Silver Creek Hills. Back of us were beautiful homes and wonderful shops, and a back country of timber, plantations, and fine residences.

But if I first admired the river banks and towns, I now gave all my attention to the teeming life of the river itself. The continuous procession of boats coming down the long reach suggested a migration of all eastern people. Anchored to the bank close by was a big flat. The owner was busily making shingles out of pine he had brought from the Allegheny country. Joel had talked with him while waiting for me and said the man could sell all the shingles he turned out, and was halting at Lousiville only long enough to earn money for supplies, as he was bound for New Orleans. There were strings of arks and broadhorns drifting down to run the Indian Shute, and there were many flats in the creek, loading for the South Country. And there were some keels poling upstream close to the bank and making twenty miles a day. These last were bound for Pittsburg with cargoes of tobacco and whisky, and what not. Whereever the eye ranged was the throb of life. And yet only some thirty years before the Indian Shore and almost all of Kentucky was a howling wilderness. So close were we to primeval conditions that even now one did not have to travel far from Louisville to hear the wolves at their nightly howling.

We feasted on the ham and bread, pausing between mouthfuls to watch and listen to the people from far places as they floated toward us, or passed us. Joel had bought a pint of whisky for a shilling at a waterside place and mixed some with river water, which we drank. My dram was a small one and as I was finishing it, a deep voice behind us advised—

"Better leave a drink in the bottle for the morrow, comrades."

We turned about and beheld what to me, at least, was the most amazing couple I had ever gazed on. A man and a girl. But such a man and such a girl! He was a good six feet four, and beautifully built. He held a black felt hat, ornamented by a broken plume, in one huge hand. His bare head was thatched with bushy red hair and reminded me of a blazing torch. Although the day was warm he wore a leather coat and blue breeches met by homespun stockings. In contrast were his fine shoes, having cost a pretty piece of money and boasting of gilt buckles. Belted from the shoulder and hanging down his side was a long sheathed sword. In the belt around his waist were a tomahawk, knife and flintlock pistol. His clean-shaven face was a brick red except where it was streaked with livid welts. All in all I had never seen a handsomer set-up man, nor a more reckless countenance. His blue eyes met our gaze in a steady stare, then softened as a slight smile disclosed the whitest of teeth.

The girl, pressing against his side and under his arm, held her head high and the chin thrust forward, as if she were of a royal family. She looked down at us, as I thought, rather contemptuously; and her eyes could have been inherited only from the giant towering above her. Her hair, also, was red, but fine as the meshes of a spider's web. She imitated her father by resting a brown hand on her hip as she haughtily surveyed us. What was very noticeable in her appearance were her trousers of dressed doeskin, almost white in color, and tucked into tiny ankle-high moccasins The latter were richly decorated with beads after the Indian fashion. She wore a short jacket of Spanish blue cloth, cut like a boy's except that it was stitched with gold thread and gay with gold lace at collar and cuffs. A small rabbit-skin hat was perched on, rather than covering, her red hair. Around her slim waist was belted a curiously curved knife in a red sheath.

---

*Now a part of Louisville.

†Never flourished. Now a suburb of New Albany. Gen. Clark had a home near it.

"Company manners, Jeffy," muttered Joel. "King and queen come a-visiting." Then he scrambled to his feet, offered a hand and cried:

"It's a long time since I saw you. Saw you only once, and just a glimpse—it was at Natchez. I don't think I knew your name. But that sword! And that red hair!"

"Softly about the hair, comrade," rumbled the man. "Princess and I are touchy about our hair." And his arm, reaching down over the girl's shoulder, pressed her to him and, if possible, the small chin crept out another degree and the head went up even more haughtily. Then, very complacently, the stranger was continuing, "Few forget Bully McGin once they see him."

Joel enthusiastically exclaimed—

"Few will ever forget the little lady, once seeing her!"

McGin smiled approvingly. The girl's gaze lost its coldness as she looked into my companion's kindly face. And she stretched out a hand to him but continued to ignore me.

Joel became confused and hesitated. McGin's eyes narrowed. Joel bluntly said—

"You're waiting for my name?"

"Ay, your name. You've taken the Princess by the hand. Honest men have names. Only honest men shake hands with the Princess."

Joel sighed and said:

"I've done no wrong, but I've had to keep my name covered since leaving Tennessee. I am Joel Snow. This is my stepson, Jeffry Lang. We're wandering and looking about a bit."

McGin slapped his hat against his thigh and roundly declared:

"You're an honest man, or I'm no judge. Names are like coats. One wears 'em or don't. You've nothing to fear from us, Snow. The Princess, my daughter, is named Polly for her lady mother."

The girl bowed gravely to Joel, shortly to me. I gaped and awkwardly ducked my head. I did not know what to make of her assuming such an air.

McGin stared at the bottle and remarked:

"It's a warm, drying sort of a day, and the river water can sicken one."

"Why, Friend McGin, here's something that will kill the sickness. It's strong enough to kill the devil," cried Joel, offering the whisky.

"I'd never have noticed you if I hadn't known you was a proper man," haughtily informed McGin. "One drink in the bottle against the morning's wakening is good. But one is enough." And he quickly swallowed all but a small dram of the whisky. Then he clapped Joel on the back and showed all his white teeth in a broad smile.

Meanwhile the girl and I were staring at each other. I began to feel the fuzz on my face grow into bushy whiskers, and the soiled spots on my clothing to spread until I was incased in dirt. My hands became painfully red and seemed to be all knuckles and knobs. Wherever her gaze darted, I could feel myself changing most unwholesomely.

I heard Joel saying:

"Every one in the South Country has heard of Bully McGin and know he's a man to be trusted. Now I've told my name I might as well tell the rest. I'd take it kindly if you'd step aside with me and advise me."

This made me uneasy, as it would leave me alone with the girl, who stared and said nothing.

"You're a proper man, Joel Snow, and if you need the loan of long tickler, or someone to stand at your side while you call on an enemy, anything except the loan of hard money, I'm at your service. The young folks can stay here and get acquainted."

McGin delivered this in a booming voice that carried far out on the river. And I knew he swaggered as he walked away with Joel although I did not shift my gaze.

The girl dropped on the warm ground and clasped her hands around her small ankles and said nothing. I sat down and, being embarrassed by the silence, told her—

"At first I thought you were a boy."

Her eyes blazed as she coldly demanded—

"Do my feet look like a boy's?" And she patted a small moccasin.

"It was a first notion only," I explained.

"Probably because I wear long breeches instead of skirts," she replied. "I've always worn 'em. I've traveled ever since I was a baby and breeches are handier than skirts."

I nodded gravely, having nothing to say. After a brief wait she was saying—

"I like your step-pap."

"Every one who knows him and likes honest men likes him," I warmly assured.

She dismissed Joel to examine me again. With a little frown she frankly informed me:

"I don't know as I'd like you. You look as if you might feel uppity."

I laughed uproariously at the notion. I was running away because of Joel. I had my rifle and some pieces of hard money, and the rough clothes I wore. She misunderstood my mirth, and I was to learn that the pride of the McGins could be rather tiresome. Now she was transformed and showing her white teeth in a snarl, making me think of an infuriated wild-cat kitten.

"What's the matter?" I ventured.

"Are you laughing at Polly McGin?" she softly queried, and leaning forward a trifle.

"Good ——! Polly McGin! No! You'd snap a body's head off because of a laugh. I laughed at the notion any one could think me uppity—I'll have to find work soon, or go hungry."

This was not literally true, as there was property in Tennessee we could dispose of, if need be. Her manner became composed, although she retained a suggestion of hostility.

"There's plenty of work for any one not too proud or lazy to work," she quietly said. "Even my father works at times, although we'd rather be traveling and seeing the world. Just now he's piloting boats through the Injun Shute to Shipping Port. He gets two dollars for each boat. He can do anything. In a fight there's no one in the world who can best him." And I was beholding a new Polly McGin, as for a moment she turned an idolatrous glance after her father. "But we keep on the move a lot. We're independent. We don't have to slave for bread and meat. My father's lived with quality."

Now on my guard, I gravely bowed and remarked—

"You go with him on his travels?"

Her eyes flickered in amazement.

"Would he be likely to leave me behind?" she demanded.

"I suppose it depends on where he goes. There are dangerous spots out in this country."

She laughed shrilly.

"Danger? For Polly McGin—Bully McGin's girl?" she scoffed. "Why, he can send me alone to New Orleans and I'll come back alone over the Natchez road, and there's no one who'd dare look at me wickedly; or speak to me roughly. Of course he takes me with him. He always has. Everywhere. My little mother died when I was born. I've always been with him ever since I can remember. Up and down the Mississippi. Among the Spaniards in Mexico. Among the Barataria smugglers. Once to Cuba. To Pensacola. He took me once to Pittsburg, but we didn't like it."

"How old are you, Miss Polly?" I humbly asked.

"That's not your affair," she stiffly replied.

"Forget I asked. I'm seventeen."

"I'm fifteen. I tell what I please. I don't like questions."

My old trick of seeing pictures woke up in my head. Now I was seeing her traveling up and down the wicked old river, penetrating the Spanish country, roaming New Orleans and Natchez. And always pressing close to her father's side and sturdy leg, his arm reaching down over her shoulder. And her head was up and her chin was agressively thrust forward, and she was swaggering in imitation of his boastful stride; and she was truculently eyeing the rough boatmen, who shifted their gaze when Bully McGin glanced at them.

"Your father's a most proper man. He must be terrible in a wring."

Another shrill laugh.

"Why, you ain't been anywhere! You don't know what folks talk about," she jeered. "When river pirates believe Bully McGin is your friend, then your flat won't be robbed. Your money won't be touched on the Natchez road. You can sleep at night in a lonely inn without thinking someone will cut your throat. You can travel among the Spanish and French settlements, and the name of Bully McGin will be your passport."

Her faith was supreme. I remained

silent, staring at her furtively. Her enthusiasm and exaltation as she talked of her father left me abashed. She suddenly continued:

"You're sly. You look sideways at a body. I don't think I'll like you. I like your step-pap."

Suddenly I discovered I was resenting her lofty manners and high talk. I told her:

"Your father may kill me for saying it, but I don't know as I shall like you. You enjoy saying things that hurt a man's feelings."

"Man?" she broke in derisively. "A young boy who's been nowhere, seen nothing, done nothing. Father, come here!" The command was imperious.

McGin hesitated; then made a little gesture of helplessness and joined us. I rose to my feet, ready to run when she set him on me. She, too, rose and haughtily explained:

"This boy says he doesn't know if he'll like me. He should be whipped."

I thought Joel's eyes would pop from his head at this extraordinary speech.

"Why, sweetheart," he remonstrated, "Jeffy's a good boy. And he ain't the kind a man whips."

McGin threw back his head and laughed thunderously. When he could control his merriment he caught the girl up under one arm and held her as easily as she would cuddle a doll, and chided:

"You'd set your old father to spanking a boy? Tut, tut. And you think he won't like you? That's fine, Princess. I'd cut his head off if I caught him making eyes at you. Now I'm sure I've made a wise bargain. He and Snow will live with us while they hunt for some work. He'll find some books in town and set you to reading them. I've been slack in that. Snow has told me something that makes me love him. Liking Snow, we must take the lad. You can use your claws on him. Cut his head off. But don't draw me into the muss." And he set her on her feet and patted her head.

THE girl stayed under her father's long arm, as if stuck to his side. Whether he held her, or whether she abandoned her desire to see me whipped, I could not tell. I only knew she was an intensely disagreeable young person, filled with arrogance and flighty airs because of her father's indulgence and the fear-forced homage of the wandering men she met.

He swung her about and set off up the bank, and I was glad to see them go. Joel nudged me and walked after them. I was for holding back, and he explained:

"You heard him say we are to put up with them for a bit. I told him what a scholar you was at book-learning. He's keen to have the girl do something with books. She can read and write, and that's uncommon fine for a woman, I'll say. But he wants her to dig deeper."

"She'll never listen to me for a minute without wanting to fight," I warned.

"Wear gloves in handling her till she gits used to you and learns to keep her claws sheathed."

"Once I tried to tame a wild-cat. Once is enough," I answered.

"You're going to try once more, Jeffy. I've told him all about our trouble. He knows my man. He says Dancer is a good one to keep away from unless you can catch him in the open. So, we'll bide with them for a bit and be no burden."

Although disliking the arrangement, I was compelled to accept it as long as it would bring peace to Joel's mind. We followed the bank for a short distance and halted before a substantial log-cabin of two rooms. The door flew open and a portly woman with a fat, round face filled the doorway. In a thin, tinkling voice she cried—

"Here's my pretty!"

Bully McGin dropped on the grass and commanded:

"Two extry places, Margy."

The girl kneeled by her father's side and pushed and worried his huge bulk until she had unfastened the long sword. As she was carrying this into the house she had time to whisper to me in passing—

"Ugly face."

I felt relieved as she disappeared through the doorway. Then I seated myself and the three of us talked about work. There was an abundance of work, but knowing Joel's reason for coming to Kentucky, our host was anxious to decide upon something that would tend to keep us from being discovered by Dancer. And, as he talked, and revealed a thorough acquaintance with Dancer's history and crimes, I began to respect Joel's judgment in running from the fellow. Both McGin and Joel accepted as a fact Dancer's terrible deadliness in striking from cover.

Thinking of the school-master's rôle I was expected to assume for the benefit of the small whirlwind inside the cabin, I remarked—

"I'd like to take to boating."

"You two can get more work at that than I can shake my fist at," promptly assured McGin. "If you'll learn the falls you can do well running boats through the Injun Shute until something else I have in mind comes to a head."

"I'm not sure of myself on the water," sighed Joel. "I ain't a natural boatman."

"We can travel down to New Orleans. If Dancer is there, we'll dig him out."

"No, no. I won't enter the South Country," quickly objected Joel. "I'd rather cross to the Injun shore and work north and take up land in Indiana."

"I may have something mighty good to offer by'n-by," said McGin. "If you'd be willing to work on a plantation just for a short spell, I can get you in on Colonel William Croghan's place, Locust Grove, just outside the town."

Colonel Croghan was the father of George Croghan, the well known Indian trader. We remembered him in Tennessee as colonel of Neveille's Fourth Virginia regiment at the battle of Monmouth. The suggestion rather appealed to me, not because of the nature of the work as much as of the man.

Rather to my surprize Joel stubbornly insisted:

"There's chances out here to work for one'self instead of working for another. I never took orders yet, and I won't begin now, even from Colonel Croghan, unless we have another war."

"Every one takes orders from some one," reminded McGin. "Even the Princess steps lively when Margy goes into action. Margy was with the girl's mother."

"I mean I won't be a hired man," explained Joel. "I'd like to take new land and clear it."

"No, no," rumbled McGin, now lying flat on his back with his powerful hands clasped under his head. "Fear drives you to say that. If you take up new land on the Injun side of the river you'll find every tree is a master. You'll be going back some thirty years. Keep near the river. Here's change. Here's life. By'n-by, I may have something mighty good to offer. Can't say any more just now. But the whole world comes to you here. I've sold my sword to the Spanish, to the French. But never have I turned it against America. I've been drinking companion of royal governors sent over by Spain and France. I've been in lots of queer places.

"After my little lady died I couldn't keep still. I took the Princess, a baby, and set out to dull the heart-ache. I've held her in one arm while with my sword in my free hand I fought my way out of more than one tight corner. Much of the Princess' early life was spent among the Barataria smugglers; and Jean Lafitte was a good friend to me. That was a breathing spell. There were kindly women to care for the child. The men worshipped her. But when she could toddle, we were afoot and afloat again; the heart-ache driving me on and on. And now I find that for life and color and fighting there's nothing to beat the Ohio so long as the world is flatboating down it."

There came the pictures again; and I was staring at a giant of a red-headed man standing at bay with a red-headed infant cradled in the crook of his arm, while his long sword cut a path of escape. I already had decided that I disliked Polly McGin for a being tempestuous, high-willed piece of insolence. These new pictures made me feel in awe of her. What a life she had led! What sights she had seen! With humility and a touch of shame I realized how insignificant I and my commonplace seventeen years must appear in her estimation.

But now McGin was done with swashbuckling stories and was enthusiastically proclaiming the wonders of the Beautiful River and the part it was destined to play in establishing the greatness of our republic. He was thoroughly familiar with Spanish intrigue and French ambition and British stubbornness. One would have expected him to be dissatisfied with anything so prosaic as commerce. But he was beginning to think of his daughter's future. Wild adventuring had yielded him sudden riches at times, and as often it had grown wings and left him. His viewpoint had matured; or perhaps the old heart-ache was dulled a bit as he watched the girl grow up an imitation of her mother.

Lifting his head with his clasped hands that he might see us the better he began:

“Why, we shipped more’n eighty thousand barrels of flour down to Louisiana last spring and fall. We’ll do better this year.”

It was odd to hear him use “we,” as if he were a controlling partner in the big trade instead of an Indian Shute pilot.

“We can’t do much with flour in summer, as low water stops our mills. We’re getting to the point where we’ll send out rye and oats. Up to now we need all the rye for whisky and all the oats for our horses. But take tobacco—more’n a thousand hogsheads have gone through the port of Louisville this season. Then there’s boatloads of hemp, raw and what we made into cables, and other rope-stuffs. Then there’s the flax, and the linen the women make from it. And there are our shipyards here. This stretch from Louisville to Pittsburg will be the most thickly settled part of the United States inside of ten years. Where we build one ark now, we’ll be building a hundred two years from now.”

“I’VE heard talk about a boat that goes by steam, that’ll do away with the flats, just as the flats did away with the pirogues and batteaux,” I remarked.

He half rose to stare at me squarely. He compassionately said:

“You’re young. As you grow older you’ll grow wiser. They make a new-fangled boat to go down the river, but any flat will do that now. But when they talk about a boat that’ll come up the river without being poled, they talk crazy.”

I subsided, but was not convinced. I began to suspect that Polly McGin inherited much of her intolerant disposition from her father. Joel began asking questions about the North shore, and McGin now revealed another side of his character, and proved he had learned much by his travels. He told us:

“This State and the western parts of Pennsylvania and Virginia are much alike as to people. Living conditions also are much the same. But when you cross the river you’ll find it different. In Ohio there are men and women from New England, who were raised to plant crops among rocks. They’re a close, saving, pinching people, but they do get ahead. I don’t believe I’d like them for neighbors. After they’ve married into the Virginians, going there to settle bounty-lands, they’ll change for the better.

“Then there’s the French around Gallipolis. In the Miami country you’ll find folks from New Jersey and the Middle states. There’s mighty few people in Indiana, Illinois and the southern part of this State. Here’s where you want to stick till something ripens I’ve been hinting about. How’d you like to make salt? Two piasters a day.”

“Where?” cautiously asked Joel.

“Mann’s Lick. About fifteen miles from here. Or why not keep right on here with me and take time to think things over?”

“I vote for salt-making,” I said. “But I’d rather float down the river. I’m beginning to think we’d be better off if we’d turn hunter and search for Dancer.”

“Son, you grow younger’n younger,” sighed McGin. “Do you allow that your step-pap is easy scared?”

“No, sir!”

“Not of anything that walks on feet!” hotly broke in Joel.

McGin continued—

“Do you think I’m likely to be scared? Of course not. No! Yet I tell you that if that critter was loose on my trail I’d run fast and walk soft.”

“You’d go and find him and kill him,” I contradicted.

“I might try it, being hot-headed. But I’m telling you that if he’s down in the South Country, and if you two managed to get by the landing at Natchez without dying of the fever that takes off so many of our Kentucky men, you’d find yourself on the point of his knife. I know the snake even better than your step-pap does. I knew him when Sam Mason was working along the Natchez Trace. In the open he’s a slinking coward. He’s the devil when he follows a man’s trail. He can’t be bought off. When he has a grudge he’ll not rest till he’s cleaned the score. If he was a brave man it would all be very simple. But he’s like a deadly fever—you can’t see him. He strikes. The bushes may make a low rustling sound. Some one may think he sees a shadow stealing away. No, no, keep away from Louisiana and Mississippi. We’ll eat and sleep. To-morrow you two can run down on a boat with me to Shipping Port.”

“You’ve hinted at something that might be a good thing for me to take up,” slowly reminded Joel. "Do I understand you ain't free to talk about it yet?"

McGin frowned slightly as if trying to come to a decision. Then he told me:

"Son, s'pose you go round to the back of the house and see what the Princess is up to. What I'm going to mention to your step-pap is for older ears than yours. The Princess doesn't seem to take to you. Maybe you can change her mind for her. As she grows older I can see she gets notions. I don't understand who she takes them from. Never from her little lady mother. But hunt her up and offer her white belts."

I was loath to intrude on the girl but, being dismissed, there was nothing else for me to do. I left them and slowly walked around the house, but halted by the chimney and reconnoitered with my ears before showing myself. There came a succession of soft *thud-thud* sounds and low exclamatory sounds as though one were exhaling violently.

I waited, and it came again. "Ha!" and then the *thud-thud*. Now very curious, I thrust my head forward and for a bit gaped in amazement, not understanding just what the child was up to. She had discarded her short, gay jacket and had the right sleeve of the white linen blouse rolled above the elbow, and the neck of the blouse open. The creamy-white of her neck and arm were in decided contrast to the tan on her hands and face. She was crouching low, with feet far apart, and was sidling forward in a curious manner. And what was also amazing was to see the ease with which she seemed to be holding her father's sword before her. As she advanced and retreated, as if drawn on rollers, she stamped and exclaimed, "Ha!" And her bared head was a fluttering mass of disheveled red hair that whipped about with each stamping step.

It required a second glance to detect her purpose. Then the scene impressed me as being ludicrous. A bag, stuffed plump with hay or straw, hung from the branch of a beech. She was stalking this most eccentrically, and her manner of lightly leaping back suggested a fear of the inanimate thing. Gazing more closely, I observed the outlines of a face rudely drawn at the top of the bag, and a small red heart midway of it. My first thought was of witchcraft—that she had made an image to represent an enemy and was slaying by proxy. I had known of such practises among some of the red tribes.

She retreated rapidly, her back to me. Then she circled about until I saw the perspiration on her forehead. With a rapid succession of "Ha-Ha-Has!" she rapidly closed in, a flaming-headed young fury, and with a low scream of triumph, thrust the sword through the small, red heart-shaped figure. It was when she had ceased her violent exercise and stood erect that she discovered me.

I slowly advanced toward her. Her half-closed eyes were as frosty as blue ice as she softly asked—

"What are you spying on me for, Ugly Face?"

"I did not wish to come here, but your father told me to. He said I was to offer you white belts. I give you one of seven strands."

She did not relish my company, but her father had sent me. She replied—

"I pick up your belts." Then, with a shrug of her slim shoulders, she fastened the neck of her blouse and added—"If my father sent you, you are welcome, Ugly Face."

"I'm not a bit welcome, Miss Fury." For she was too free with her names.

Her eyes opened so widely that I knew I never had seen such large eyes before.

"Why do you call me a fury?" she quietly asked.

"Why do you call me Ugly Face?"

"But your face is ugly."

"What of it? Is there any need of reminding me?"

After weighing my query for a moment she ignored it, and insisted—

"But I'm not a fury."

"Let's not quarrel. I'll say you are not a fury."

"You shall not," she coldly insisted. "You think it. You've said it! You shall not crawl out of it."

She was impossible as well as incomprehensible, but I must keep away from the men until they had finished their talk. I nodded at the bag and remarked:

"It bothered me at first. Now I know you're practising with the sword."

"You're quick-witted to guess that."

Bound to abide by my white wampum, I continued:

"I'd never have believed one so slight

could handle so long a weapon. You must be very strong."

This speech must have pleased her, for she was civil enough in explaining.

"I've worked hard to strengthen my wrist. My father raised me to take care of myself."

"It's remarkable," I praised. Honesty compelled me to add—

"Of course it would be different if the bag could fight back."

"I wish it could," she muttered. "But my father takes that long stick and fences with me. He fights back. Take it. I'll show you."

I refused, saying—

"He'd never forgive me if I poked a stick into you."

"Oh, but he would!" she eagerly insisted. "Take the stick."

As I hesitated, her tightly pressed lips twisted into a grimace, and she cried:

"Are you afraid? Can't you drop it if you find the work too warm? Or are you scared of getting hurt?"

I picked up the long round stick and almost before I could raise it she was crouching low before me and stamping her small foot and crying "Ha!" and working about me to find an opening.

I felt sheepish to stand there, stick in hand, while she was dancing futilely out of reach. Suddenly she came forward and elongated her slim body until it was close to the ground and extended her arm full length until the point of the sword was within an inch of my chest. Before I could move a muscle she had withdrawn and was laughing in great amusement. I gripped the stick more tightly and waited. She resumed her peculiar maneuvers and as the point was describing a small circle I suddenly struck the blade aside.

"That's not fencing!" she passionately told me; and she drew back and eyed me malevolently. The repulse had been so easily effected, and she was so angry thereat, that I laughed.

"That's what the bag would do if it could fight back," I told her.

Then she was at me in a bewildering maze of thrusts. I struck blindly, and one sweeping blow all but missed the fiery head and grazed her shoulder. With a cry between a squeal and a yell she straightened out and I felt a red hot pain in my chest close to the collar bone.

Drawing back and standing erect she saluted and mockingly cried—

"I had you then, Ugly Face, if I hadn't pulled my thrust!"

I ran my hand inside my shirt and felt strangely faint as I drew it forth and beheld the blood on my fingers.

"By ——! The young imp has blooded him!" roared the deep voice of McGin.

Then I was sitting on the grass and staring stupidly into his anxious face as he kneeled beside to tear open my shirt. Over his shoulder peered the frightened face of Joel.

Then the girl's face came between me and McGin, and there was stark horror in the blue eyes as she beheld the small puncture.

CHAPTER III

WOMAN-LED

MY HURT was nothing. Why I should have gone faint I could not understand. The McGins were vastly disturbed by the accident, however, and the girl was wild-eyed and inconsolable, and persisted in calling herself a "murderer." After she had gone on in this strain for a while, her father never attempting to stop her, I grew impatient and told her she was merely clumsy. Whereat her mood changed and she retorted:

"You have an ugly temper. I'll be sorry no longer."

Yet she was sorry and I was ashamed at having grieved her. To make amends I hunted the Louisville shops and found three books, one of which was "The Lay of the Last Minstrel" by a Scotchman named Scott. She began it to be polite, but quickly was oblivious to the world and the rolling Ohio until she had finished it.

The cabin held three interests. Polly thought only of her books when not under her father's arm; and he gave me some money and urged me to buy what I could. Meriwether Lewis and William Clark were back these two years from their tremendous journey to the Pacific, and papers throughout the United States were printing accounts of their adventures, and the influence of their reports on fur-trade possibilities was daily growing greater. Young men on the Atlantic coast were hurrying westward and down the Ohio, eager to reach the little French town of St. Louis and to try their luck up the Missouri. There lay my interest in life, but Joel would have none of it.

The third interest, his and McGin's, as I quickly learned after being pricked by the long sword, had to do with stealing an empire. Aaron Burr, acquitted on his trial for treason, had sailed to Europe to enlist the aid of France or England so he might detach Mexico from Spain. McGin had been concerned in Burr's first failure and narrowly escaped serious trouble. He belived in Burr implicitly and pointed to the acquittal as sufficient answer to those who would charge the former Vice-President with scheming to set up a western empire for the express purpose of assailing the integrity of the new republic. Why practical Joel should have taken any stock in the venture was beyond my comprehension. He was the last man I would have named as taking an interest in the visionary. In Herman Blennerhassett, who had lost his beautiful island home in the very river flowing by our house, we had an excellent example of the price paid by those who take up with schemers.

I made light of Burr's ambition when alone with Joel. As this had no effect, I denounced it as a mad, dangerous business. He was content to tell me:

"You know, Jeffy, we don't get scared of anything that walks on legs if we can see it. Mexico is a fair-sized chunk of country and easy seen. And I never cared for Spaniards."

Shortly after this Joel and I were separated a bit, for the first time in a long time. And for a like period Polly lost her father. The two were very mysterious about their business and I believed the hot-headed McGin was leading my old friend into mischief. I told him as much and threatened to trail him when he announced he was about to take a journey with McGin.

"Now, Jeffy, have I ever tried to fool you? This trip has nothing to do with what you think. Do you s'pose McGin would go away and leave his daughter for any length of time? You just stay here and keep her company and we'll be back soon, none the worse for our little business."

So I was left with the girl and Margy. Polly worried none for her father's welfare. He was invincible, and my stepfather could come to no harm while under his protection. She missed him terribly, however, although she fought to conceal the fact.

Soon after the two men set out on their errand I discovered Polly had a wonderfully sweet voice. For she took to singing to conceal her loneliness. Some of her songs were "lonesome" tunes and made one feel sad. I asked her to sing one of my favorites "King's Mountain." My mother had sung it to me when I was a little boy, and despite the simplicity of the air, I thought it a very pretentious musical composition. It was a ballad of ten or twelve verses and had achieved much popularity on its appearance shortly after the battle.

" 'Twas on a pleasant mountain
The Tory heathens lay;
With a doughty major at their head,
One Ferguson they say."

Thus sang Polly McGin; and very young and sweet she looked as she forgot my presence and gave her whole thought to the old ballad. I had a notion that I possessed a singing voice and when she reached the last verse I joined in lustily:

"To all the brave regiments,
Let's toast 'em their health,
And may our good country
Have quietude and wealth."

She eyed me gravely and encouraged me. "You sing well, but too loud."

"You sing beautifully. Sing some more."

Now she was all smiles and satisfaction, and generously replied:

"Your voice sounded loud because you're indoors. Outdoors it would be almost right." She shifted to the open doorway and commenced "The Dance," to the tune of "Yankee Doodle."

"Cornwallis led a country dance,
The like was never seen, sir,
Much retrograde and much advance,
And all with General Greene, sir."

"Well?" she cried after finishing the verse, "there're twelve more. I won't sing them alone."

"It's the name," I lugubriously explained. "Makes me think of Dancer. I'm worried about Joel."

"My father's with him," she reminded. "How could any hurt come to him? The McGins take care of their friends."

"But where did they go? What business are they on? If not for Joel's last words

I'd fear it was that mad Mexico venture."

"No venture my father takes up is mad," she warmly replied. "Now I'll not tell you where they went."

Nor would she sing any more that day.

It hurt me to think she shared the men's confidence. I kept away from her, my pride hurt, and yet mighty curious to question her; only I did not believe she would tell me anything.

She was up and away next morning before I woke up. Margy said she had walked into town to look for a book. While I was eating my breakfast Margy said:

"My pretty one is only a child. She ain't had the right raising. A big man like you should always feel very gentle toward such."

"I do. I do," I insisted, but my face burning. And before I left the table I made up my mind to consider Polly as an irresponsible child with a knack of being peculiarly annoying at times.

I went to the river to watch the boats, and wish Joel was back and that we were doing something besides marking time. I envied a man on a broadhorn floating sidewise to the current and playing a lively tune on a fiddle. The *stamp*, *stamp* of his foot, marking time, came very distinctly across the water. He had more than a thousand miles of adventures, new scenes and strange life before him. Joel and I, if not for his violent prejudice against the South Country, could have our boat and be floating somewhere. There were other places besides Louisiana. There was St. Louis and the lonely Missouri. Now that I was hearing so much about Lewis and Clark I found myself keen to work up the Missouri.

My reverie was broken by two hands being clapped over my eyes. They were small hands but I made a pretense of not recognizing them and pretended to be alarmed and to be struggling mightily to escape. Then she sat down beside me, and never had I seen a face more radiant.

"Can you shoot?" she eagerly asked, thrusting her face close to mine.

"Of course."

"I mean, shoot good—the best."

"Only a McGin—" I had started to say—"only a McGin can shoot the best," but remembered Margy's words and ended, "can shoot better."

She saw no sarcasm in this, but nodded her head slowly and murmured:

"Of course, my father is the best shot on the river. I don't know whether you're boasting, or can really shoot."

"A man shouldn't say he can do anything 'best'. I'm used to shooting. I'm a good shot." And I wondered if a new danger was coming to me and she was about to warn me to get my gun.

"You're not a man," she corrected. "Get your rifle. We'll have time to catch the flat. Bentley, the pilot, told me about it. I have money enough."

"Look here! Not so fast. What are you up to now?"

"We're going down to Shipping Port with Bentley and you will shoot in a match for a beef. Bentley says boatmen and backwoodsmen will be there. Five shots for a dollar. I've told Bentley you'll win. We'll be spry and catch the boat and ride down with him."

"You have no right to tell any one I'll win," I remonstrated. "And I'm not going."

She was running to the house before I could get on my feet. I raced after her, and met her as she came through the doorway with my rifle, with Margy trying to tell her something. She dodged me and ran swiftly to the river. It was plain she proposed entering the match, now that I had refused. I entered the house and snatched my powder-horn and bullet pouch from a peg and made after her. She was aboard a flat some ten feet from the shore as I came up. Without lessening my stride I made a flying leap and landed on the small deck at the stern.

A BIG hairy man, handling the long steering-sweep, roared at me—

"Where'n —— you think you're going?"

"To Shipping Port to shoot in a match."

"Not by a —— sight! You're going overboard the second I can leave this oar."

"Keep still, Bentley," shrilly cried Polly. "You're only the pilot."

Bentley stared at her vacuously, then grinned sheepishly, and reminded—"But you said he wa'n't to come aboard, Miss Polly."

"He's here. He might as well stay."

And she walked to the bow and watched

the current ahead. In a low voice Bentley told me—

"If she wa'n't Bully McGin's gal you'd be overboard with your ears full of water before this, young cock."

"Run in shore. I'll walk it. I understood her to say I would be welcome."

"It's your —— brisk way of coming aboard," he growled. "Stay on board, or swim ashore. No matter to me. But you're a fool to think you can best men like Shank and Nate Wood."

"Good shots, eh?"

"Good? Best shots on the river. One or t'other carry off all the purses 'round here. Used to take turns; now each is going after it. For your dollar and what powder'n lead you waste you have a free trip down and walk home." And from then on he ignored me and gave attention to his business.

I kept away from the girl, as I was now convinced it was impossible for the most peaceably inclined to talk with her for more than a minute without arousing her explosive temper. The family owning the boat was clustered about Polly and she explained the various peculiarities of the current, being familiar with every rod of the way from accompanying her father so many times.

The two miles were soon covered and we were nosing up to the bank for the pilot to go ashore. Polly was very cordial and handed me my rifle without a word of explanation. She said the boat was owned by New Englanders and was bound for Cincinnati, or St. Louis, or New Orleans. The "movers" had not decided which port to make. Then she left me to walk ahead with Bentley. I followed them for half a mile back from the river to an opening of several acres. At one end of this were a group of men under a beech, singing, and dancing grotesquely. Apart stood a small group as silent as the other was noisy. The former group was composed of boatmen, celebrating an early departure to the South Country. The quiet men, tall, lanky fellows, were backwoodsmen. They gazed longingly at the small keg of liquor and were practising moderation until after they had finished shooting.

As Bentley and the girl approached the boatmen, one would have chucked her pretty chin had not the pilot struck the hand down and warned:

"Keep your paws to yourself, Shank. This is Bully McGin's daughter. I'm going to bet two dollars on you every time you shoot and don't want you spoiled by Bully."

Shank growled:

"No harm meant. If you bet on me you'll win, Bentley. What's Bully's gal doing here?"

"She fetched the youngster down to show us some fancy shooting."

Shank lowered his gaze as the girl stared at him and repeated:

"No harm meant. Any gal's safe here as they'd be at home. They don't have to belong to Bully McGin to be treated like little ladies." Then his gaze traveled to me, and he sneered, "Is this cub under Bully's wing?"

Bentley hesitated and glanced inquiringly at the girl. She shook her red head; but qualified—

"Not after the shooting's finished."

The men laughed. Shank tossed off a tin cup of raw liquor and told his companions—

"Big enough to take his needings. Looks —— uppity. But I wish he was tougher meat." Wheeling on me and scowling heavily he said:

"I'm more alligator'n man. Git away from here afore the shooting's over."

Boiling with rage and not daring to speak for fear my voice would squeak, or tremble, I joined the silent group. They eyed me curiously. An undersized man with a ragged hat bustled forward and eagerly inquired:

"Going to shoot? A fine beef critter. Good milch cow. Worth fifteen dollars of any man's money. Might be your luck to win."

Several lean faces twitched with the desire to smile. I tossed a dollar into the hat and received my target. This was a piece of board with two small strips of paper, forming a cross, stuck to the blackened side.

Bentley and the boatmen advanced, and the pilot announced his desire to bet two dollars on Shank. A tall, silent man, who looked as if having Indian blood in his veins, quietly said—

"I'll take that bet."

I knew this must be Nate Wood, first shot among the backwoodsmen.

The owner of the beef wished to wait until more marksmen arrived, but was promptly warned of dire trouble if he delayed the match longer. The range agreed upon was about eighty yards. Shank offered to shoot first and his target was posted in a tree across the opening. He did not appear to be affected by his liquor, and stood steadily enough as he commenced firing his five shots. After two shots Bentley insisted:

"Take the rest lying down, Shank. Your friends have money on you."

"I'll drive plumb center standing up," he assured.

He finished his shots and when the little man came on the run, bringing the target I expected to behold an excellent score. There was a roar of derision as the board was exhibited. And I was mightily surprized as I pressed near and observed how widely he had missed the mark. Bentley was in a rare rage, but did not care to express it.

Shank winked his eyes and stared, incredulously at first, at the target. He glared at the boisterous boatmen and happened to detect me smiling slightly. Instantly he gave his rage its freedom and would have leaped upon me had not Polly McGin darted in front of him and shrillingly warned:

"Not till after the shooting. A man can't shoot his best right after he's had a fight."

"That's right," sourly declared Bentley. "No fighting till after the beef's shot off."

Others chimed in, insisting my nerves should not be upset, and Shank went back to the keg, calling to me over his shoulder, "I'll wait. But the wring won't lose nothing by waiting."

I could not feel kindly toward Polly McGin as I stood there, a stranger to all the men, while the boatman impatiently waited for the moment when he could attack me. I even wondered if the girl's continual moving about with her father, in the midst of tumult and bickerings, had not entirely transformed what should have been gentleness into a lust for rough scenes.

As to the match, the boatmen worried me none, although almost to a man they were excellent shots. But they had been unwise in drinking before the match. Hardened to liquor, they carried themselves steadily enough, but their eyes fooled them. They took their shots in turn, all being eager to be back to the keg.

After the boatmen had finished, the little man nodded for me to step to the mark. I shook my head. Nate Wood evidenced his willingness to lead off for the woodsmen by throwing himself on the ground under the beech and resting his rifle on a chunk of a dead log. After he had fired three shots, one of the woodsmen insisted he should stand while shooting the remaining two.

"It wa'n't agreed," he slowly replied. "Shoot the way you want to."

The small man declared the rules for the match allowed all shots to be fired from any position. But instead of reclining again Wood said—

"I'll show I can shoot standing." And he did.

As the promoter of the match trotted up with the target a smile of triumph flashed across Wood's dark face. Two arms of the tiny cross had been hit, and the other three shots were close to the center. A silver dollar would have covered the five.

Polly McGin sidled up to me and whispered—

"I hope you'll win."

It was her first speech to me since she landed.

"Which? The beef or the fight?" I growled.

"Oh, of course you'll win the fight. Any one can whip a drunken boatman."

This was not true. The keg had not in the least diminished Shank's strength, brutal cunning, or animal courage. His failure at shooting had filled him with a rage that only a bloody brawl could lessen.

"We shoot well in Tennessee," I told the girl, and turned away to watch the next man.

TO BE CONTINUED

Slants on LIFE

by Bill Adams

JUST FOLKS

I GET very very sick at heart sometimes, if I meet people who are dishonorable and don't care. That sort of thing seems to make every muscle weary, to give a deadening pain, to make the sky go very black. I have met sad blackguards in my life. My health was ruined by one—a devil doctor who took delight in torture of the spirit—but that's another story.

But also, over and over and over, I've met very poor folk, struggling, fighting against odds, who in an instant forget all their worldly bothers when they find some one with a smile and a cheer. I love the common people of America—or anywhere else, I think.

Sometimes I meet folks who cause me to stop to stare after them. I spend an immense lot of time loafing at street-corners to watch people's faces. I often lean against a lamp-post for several hours to do so.

Yesterday I saw a very lean brown-faced woman in an old hat with a wide brim. Her ankles were thin as sticks, her wrists thin, her fingers bony. Her skirt hung upon her, black and without pretension of anything save covering her limbs. Her waist was like to her skirt. Her shoes were a bit down at the heel. Her face was oval—she must have been a pretty girl long ago, very—and her brows were finely penciled. Her mouth was small and very firm, and her eyes were clear gray, bright, with no expression in them but the same expression that her lips, nose, and all her body wore—quiet courage.

At her side was a young boy, her son, of about seventeen and I saw in his face mirrors of by-gone days. His eyes were very wonderful. His face was the very copy of his mother's. It was a beautiful pair they made, as they came toward me over the street, passing amidst the hurrying motor traffic. In that boy's eyes I saw all manner of things at once—oxen on the prairies, and Indians upon scrawny pinto ponies; gaunt men with axes in their hands and guns on their shoulders. I saw honest men and honorable women crossing the sea to come to America, that they might know freedom, also.

I love a simple country face. I love that unfearing unpuzzled straightforward look that one sees now and then in the poor folk from far out in the farm country. I wish I'd lived when common folk were more numerous.

There's an old fellow down in the southern part of the State who has only one tooth left, and who is egg-bald, and who hobbles on a stout stick. His brows almost hide his sunken eyes. His neck is wrinkled and weatherworn, his face all puckered up.

Many years ago, on the "perary," he was three miles from his wagon and team, and his wife, when he broke a leg; then he crawled on two hands and one knee the three miles to the wagon. His wife set the leg and by and by they came on over the "perary."

The old-timer calls me by my first name and treats me as though I were his contemporary, and if that isn't high honor—well—it's high enough for me, quite. He used to take care of my dog for me when I went away from home, and he called the dog by my name in my absence, for he said—

"It makes it feel same as like you wuz round, Jawn."

I don't know how he ever came to call me John. He is rather hard of hearing, and that probably started it. Now and then he writes me a letter and it begins—

"Helo Jon how be you I be fine"

Well—

What I sat down to say was that I think it's nice to live today in all the rush of life, away back in those other days at times, with the old people who made the United States. I get more real delight, I think, in a letter from some hard-working farmer man or woman, illiterate and rough, than I ever would get by hearing from a high-up and powerful politician or man of culture. I do love simplicity. Friendship asks no more, does it? Nothing but just a bit of common neighborliness from one to another.

The Slat Wagon

by Leonard H. Nason

Author of "A Sergeant of Cavalry," "Eye-Wash," etc.

"MAKE up your packs," called the first sergeant, stalking down the road among the trees. "The outfit moves forward at daybreak."

A wild hum of comment rose from the underbrush. Men stood up and looked at each other in consternation.

"What was that?"

"Make up your packs!"

"What will we make 'em up with?"

"Move forward!"

"How come, forward! Them G. I. cans fall close enough right here."

The top kick came to a group of men clustered about the rolling kitchen, peeling potatoes for the morrow—four of them, the goldbrick squad. If they had been congressmen, they would have formed an agricultural block or something of the kind. Work was foreign to their nature, they had no fixed place in the battery. Odd jobs, digging officers' dugouts, working in the kitchen, taking care of the few horses, helping the mechanics, and in between times crabbing and rawhiding. What a gang! "Belt" Haynes, the "Funnyman," "Dish-Face" Sployd and "Goose" Mott. They solemnly peeled spuds, unshaven and unshorn.

Unto them came the first sergeant.

"You men," said he, grandly, "will load up the slat wagon, and have the care av it, and march behind it whiles we play hide-and-seek with Fritz up beyant the river-bank. 'Tis mostly ammunition we'll carry on it, and officers' bedding. An' you, Goose Mott, av I find anything gone at the small av the day, I'll have your black soul flutterin' at——'s gate within the half hour."

This referred to a time when Goose had bartered half a dozen bath towels removed from a lieutenant's suitcase for a large quantity of liquor, with which the whole kitchen detail, mess sergeant, cooks, and all had got drunk. Officers of artillery did carry suitcases and had bath towels, at least at that stage of the game, for the outfit had but newly arrived at the front and, judging from the fact that none of them were out at seat, knee or elbow, had not been thereon for more than a week or so.

"That won't be a bad job," said Belt, after the top had gone. "I hate to march with the column. The wagons will be at the tail end and if anything starts, the ditch for us. No horses to hold, and no non-competent officers to bother us."

"An' we can fall out and get a drink whenever we want to," said Funnyman.

"Do you realize, you simple idiot, that you are now at the front, and that there is not a drink parlor on every corner?" asked Goose bitterly.

"Well, we can fall out, anyway," said Belt. "What's the diff'?"

This battery had sustained, during the past week, a continuous bombardment. A counter attack by the French and American forces at Soissons had relieved the pressure on their front, and the forward movement was the result. The limbers came up from Grand Foret as soon as nightfall made it safe to travel, and the goldbrick gang were kept awake a good part of the night by the raging of the drivers, as they stumbled around in the darkness, trying to unhitch and tie their nervous charges. With good foresight, they had moved their tarpaulin from its usual resting-place quite a distance into the woods, so that the mess sergeant, awake at 2 A. M., and hunting them with crimson language was unable to find them. The cook had to split his own wood and light his own fire.

"I'd just like fo' to get my two paws on that there Sployd fo' jus' one little ole minute, I'd sure frail him till his old face was flatter than it is now!"

The cook was a tar heel, yclept Conrad, and known as "Cracker" Conrad. He could neither read nor write, and upon being asked by the chief of the Third Field Artillery Brigade as to the whereabouts of his gas mask, had produced a rabbit's foot from his pocket. He could, however, camouflage corned willie and canned hash until the worst chow-hound in the outfit could not say whether it was fresh beef or not. Hence, he was above rubies.

"How is breakfast coming, Conrad?" Thus the Old Man, the captain. An old-timer, he, who had won his commission before the war, after long service in the ranks. No camouflage deceived him. He knew all the tricks, having employed them himself in bygone days. Conrad straightened up painfully.

"Captain, suh, the K. P.'s is A. W. O. Loose. I kain't find 'em nowhere. That there Belt and Goose Mott ain't wuth —— no how."

"Well, we'll see if we can find them for you," and he turned off into the woods.

At that time, a battery of field artillery had plenty of wheeled transportation. Two fourgons, small covered wagons, one used as the battery office, the other for the observers and instrument detail to figure firing-data in, and a huge van known as a slat wagon. This last was drawn by four to six horses, driven from the saddle like gun teams. It had two tiny front wheels, supposed to give it a small turning radius, but the disadvantage of those wheels more than offset any help they gave in turning. This wagon had sides of slats, hence its name, and was always loaded far beyond its capacity. It was equipped with a brake that wound up by a worm and wheel gear. By the time the lone man on the seat had wound up the brake the need of it was past. The three drivers and all within hearing would then arm themselves with crowbars and release the brake, after considerable language.

The slat wagon of the battery in question had been drawn into the woods and covered with boughs for concealment from hostile aircraft. The captain found two men industriously working about it, removing the leaves and branches, re-fastening the spare pole, and giving the appearance of intense labor.

"Why aren't you at the kitchen, Haynes?"

"Sir, the first sergeant told us to load up the slat wagon, and we were getting it ready."

"How long have you been working at it?"

"Oh, quite a while, sir."

If it had been lighter, the two men might have seen the captain's mouth twitch. Both Haynes and the Funnyman were in their stocking feet. And then a fresh voice broke in, rather distant, yet clearly audible.

"Aw, lemme alone, Goose, I ain't gonna get up yet. We come out here so we wouldn't have to get up." A murmur of another voice. "T' —— with the Old Man! He and that shavey are still poundin' their ear. Catch them gettin' up before daylight."

The two by the fourgon were frozen to their hearts' innermost chamber. Horror dripped from them. There was a silence that shrieked. The Old Man fought inwardly for self-control. The sight of those two pitiful figures by the slat wagon would have made a brigadier laugh.

"Get Mott and Sployd and report to the cook," said the captain, at last, and he went off to get the gunners up.

The four went sadly off to the kitchen and the Cracker's wrath.

"One more bonehead play like that," said Goose, "and I told you very clearly and distinctly that the captain was around looking for trouble, and the whole works will be sent back to the echelon."

Goose, perhaps I should have said before, was a college man, who had been cast ignominiously from Plattsburgh for climbing upon the stage and dancing with the actresses at a burlesque show. At once he had enlisted, but a life of ease does not fit one for the rigors of a soldier's life in the regular army. Hence, private Mott's ultimate end in the kitchen.

"I don't crave no echelon," said Funnyman, "standin' formations and workin' like a slave all day. An' the Dutch raid the —— out o' that place every night, too."

"You an' me, both," agreed the other two. "Shells is bad enough, but when one o' them birds gets layin' great big eggs around, I want to be somewhere else."

The echelon is the place where the extra gunners, drivers, etc., of the battery stay, and where the horses are kept. It is usually some distance back from the front, but not so far but that a night bombing squadron can reach it. The officers there all suffer from ingrowing grouch because they can not be at the front and they take it out on the men.

Breakfast in the dark. The whole outfit sitting around, making merry over bacon and syrup, a slice of hard French army bread, and a cup of black coffee. These men could have eaten nails and enjoyed them. No house dweller ever knows the raging appetite of the outdoor man, his tissues wasted from a night-long battle with the cold. The goldbrick gang were employed in loading the slat wagon, carrying cases of ammunition from a pile in the underbrush. They were unfed and bruised in spirit. The battery was unsympathetic. When the task of loading was at last completed, it was a sad party of four that grouped themselves about the wagon, eating hastily-made sandwiches of bacon. When the wagon pulled out, a drawing of straws decided that Belt should ride the seat and have charge of the brake, and that Goose Mott should crawl under the tarpaulin, safe from prying eyes, and sleep. In this manner the slat wagon took up the march, trailing in the rear of the battery. Down the long hill they went, to the road that leads into Chateau Thierry. The sky had turned to a rosy hue, but the sun's rays had not yet reached over the eastern hills. Far, far up in the cloudless sky appeared a silver dot, like a tiny moth. Upraised arms began to point this out. Speculation was rife.

"It's a boche."

"Ain't either. If it was, the anti-aircraft would be shootin' him up by now."

"The anti-aircraft are movin' up the same as we are."

The moth grew suddenly larger. The column halted in consternation. A loud command from the head. "Under cover, men!" The moth no longer looked like anything but an airplane—except perhaps a swooping hawk, and it was coming nearer at terrific speed. Near the road was a patch of woods, and longing eyes began to look in that direction. The swoop ended. At the head of the column there was a sound like a bundle of firecrackers and shouts. The column left horses, guns and wagons, and made for the woods. Some laughed. A thousand men doing a fifty yard dash is an amusing sight.

SOMETHING awakened Goose Mott where he slept peacefully beneath the tarpaulin. He lay for a moment trying to place himself. The wagon had stopped, but he heard no voice, no sound but a loud humming. Startled, he threw off the tarp and stood up. Directly over him, and turning and darting like a fish, was a German plane. He could see the thin square cross on its underwings, not at all like the cross that he had believed the German planes wore. Also he saw that he was entirely alone. His eye fell on the machine gun resting on the pile of boxes. A chance at last to show his worth, to bring down this plane when all had fled! Floundering over the load, he reached the gun, pulled back the lever, and turned loose on the German. The clip ran through with a soul-stirring clatter. With trembling fingers, he inserted another. The boche fired another burst, went into a side slip, and then flew up the valley, flying low, and paying no attention to the machine gun fire that was beginning to be brought to bear on him from every angle.

Slowly the artillerymen came back from the woods, and the column started again.

"Who did the shootin' from the slat wagon?"

"Goose Mott, he stuck by the gun and drove off the Jerry."

"Good for you, Goose, good stuff."

Comment and congratulations from all sides. Goose, enthroned by the gun, made no remark. His mind was on a future day, the regiment at salute, and "Black Jack" pinning the D. S. C. on his breast.

A motorcycle and side car barked along the side of the road. The major of the first battalion unwound his long frame from the little side car and stepped out.

"Who fired that machine gun?" said he.

Men dropped back from the telephone detail to hear, and the drivers of the battery next in rear urged their horses forward to get all that was going on.

"I, sir," said Goose, standing as straight as the bumping wagon would allow.

"Come down here." He went down.

"D'you see that balloon?"

He pointed far up the valley, to where a kite balloon could be dimly seen, far over on the French sector, like a jelly bean in the morning mist.

"Yes, sir."

"Well, why don't you try to bring that down? Why don't you fire a couple of clips at that? D'you think you are in a wild west show or what? You shot away as much money as you get in two months. You're under arrest!"

The side car barked on its way.

Much mirth from the drivers and telephone men.

"You'll get the Croddagerr, all right, Goose."

"Now will yuh do it again?"

"By ——," said Goose, "I wouldn't touch that gun if the whole German army came down the road, and every one in the division from the general down was begging me on his hands and knees," and he crawled under the tarp again and composed himself for a sleep. Alas, sleep was not for him. He could hear quite plainly the telling of the tale of his downfall. Men kept dropping back all the time to find out what had happened, and after Dish Face and the Funnyman had gleefully related the details, with more and more additions each time, to some fifteen or twenty different hearers, poor Goose could stand it no longer. He appeared and joined the other three at the tail of the wagon. The machine gun bobbed serenely above their heads.

In the shank of the morning, the battery turned into the courtyard of a ruined chateau to water the horses. This took hours. There was but room for two horses to drink at a time, so that each team was unharnessed, led up to the trough, given their fill, and allowed to breathe while the other four were given a like treatment. The six were then hitched again to gun or caisson, and the next team given a chance. Jerry paid them no heed. He had other things on his mind, principally getting out of the Marne salient before the Yanks and the French closed the neck of it at Soissons, and captured the great masses that had been packed into it with the expectation of taking Paris within the week. But these gay and heedless boys trod too closely upon his heels, so that he sat him down, after a little while, at a place called Le Charmel, like some great beast at bay, and mangled them and scattered them to the four winds. But this has no bearing on the present tale.

The slat wagon was last. The first sergeant, Mulcahey, directed their entrance to the courtyard.

"There is a horse's grave just beyant the road, there, be careful you don't fall into it. Now, unhitch them lead caballyos, and after thim swing and wheel. Put the brake on whiles the horses are bein' watered."

Having ever in mind the horse's grave into which they must not fall, Belt Haynes, who rode the seat and looked after the brake, wound it up with all his force. As a means of getting greater leverage, he hung himself on the little knob that was on the rim of the wheel by which the brake was applied. The knob broke off. Belt hastily tucked it in the pocket of his shirt and said naught.

The horses were safely watered. The top kick mounted his horse, preparatory to joining the rest of the column.

"Forw-a-r-d—h-o-w!"

The teams lunged forward, but the slat wagon moved not an inch. There was some jibbing and kicking.

"Come on wid that wagon," cried Mulcahey, "put the hooks to thim goats. Put the hooks to 'em, I tell yuh!" He turned and came trotting back. "Come on you guys now, heavy on them wheels! Get off the seat, you, Haynes, and give 'em a hand!" The four assisted, two at each wheel.

"Let's go!" roared the top kick, and rode up behind one of the wheel horses, and kicked her violently. No female will stand for being kicked. This wild mare, rolling the white of her eye at Mulcahey, stood straightway up on her legs, came down crossways of the pole, and then cast her rider afar. He landed at a distance, his steel helmet clanging on the stones of the court. She remained quietly astride the pole, and contemplated the scene with a contented air. The goldbricks gave heavy sighs, and leaned against the wheels.

The top dismounted in stern silence. He tied his horse to one of the slats, and climbed slowly to the seat.

"So," said he. "The brake is on."

He regarded the four with a lack-luster eye.

"In all my service," said he, " 'tis never been my misfortune to have to do wid such a bunch of *omadhauns*. If any wan av you had the brains a generous God give to a sardine, he wad know better than to put a brake on an' leave it that way. And the knob bruk off. 'Tis me that would like to break a few of the knobs off your ugly mug, Belt Haynes. Unhitch the lead an' swing, an' straighten out this she-devil av a wheel horse. The rest av this gang let loose this brake."

Three men with pick handles and twenty minutes' straining loosened the brake. The mare was put in her place and all rearranged once more.

"Now," said the first sergeant, "hang your ears this way. Turn very slowly and gradually so that the slope av the ground will give the wagon a start. Put them horses well into their collars. Put some bacon into those wheels. Now, wan I give the word, all together. Let's go!"

They went. The slat wagon moved with surprizing ease. It barked the shins of the skittish wheel horse, who promptly squealed and kicked the footboard into toothpicks. Haynes retired to the back of the wagon.

"That unspeakable unmentionable," cried the top, and catching up the pick handle, he bore down upon the plunging horses. Each one of the six feared that that wildly waved club was for it alone, they swung around as one, the tiny front wheels turning easily, and all but putting the wagon over; shouts, commands, trampling of hoofs. A sudden stop. The front wheels were sunk in the ground to their hubs. They were in the horse's grave.

"Git out o' there!" cried Mulcahey, "git out o' there, spur them horses, push on the wheels, swing right, now a little forward—" *whack, whack* with the pick handle—"come up now, push! push! *push!* Gimme hold o' that —— bridle. Come on, now—" very nearly pulling the heads off the lead team—"kick up that wheel-team, come on now!"

Crack!

The action stopped suddenly. The plunging horses stood still, the goldbricks ceased to strain at the wheels, the drivers ceased to curse and spur. The first sergeant grimly dropped the bridle of the lead horse and straightened up with an air of gloomy resignation. He walked back to the wagon and peered beneath the front wheels.

"There, now, it's bruk. Oh, curse the day I ever left Ireland," and he walked apart a little and sat down, with his head in his hands. And all this while the regiment to which these men belonged was hastening forward, drawing farther and farther away with every minute.

By now the sun had risen high in the heavens, and the labor of unloading all the spare ammunition was not well received. Shells for a seventy-five are packed in a large wooden box, and are not the lightest things in the world to move. Besides, there was a barrel of horseshoes, a traveling forge, a wooden chest full of oats, the property of the stable sergeant, cylinder oil for the guns, and a table and chairs that had been "borrowed" from an abandoned farm house, and were used by the officers for meals, and to sit on. When the wagon was unloaded, the spare pole was put in place of the broken one, and the empty wagon snaked out of the hole.

"Take it out to the road," said Mulcahey, "and lave this cemetery alone after this. You lug those shells out there and load thim. Don't give me no argument! Not a word out of anny wan of yez, for the gossoons yez are!"

The top's brogue was growing more pronounced—a sign of rising wrath.

"We ain't said nothin', Sergeant," said Sployd.

"Make sure you don't." The exile of Erin regarded his horse. " 'Tis gettin' on, an' gettin' off of you I have been all the mornin'. Have I not troubles enough without bein' bothered with a horse. I'll not mount till this —— wagon is on the march wance more."

So they carried out the barrel of horseshoes, and the forge, and the oil and the incidentals, and lastly the ammunition.

"The good God only knows," said the top, "where the column is now, wid the whole sector on the move. Folly your nose down the road and cross no bridges till you come to thim," and he trotted off.

"Tell me," said Goose, bitterly, "did I leave home for this? Look at my hands, and I a man of education."

"That's why your hands is all blistered," said Dish Face. "If yuh got education, yuh otta have more brains than enlist in the regular army."

"He did it to make the world safe for a democrat," said Funnyman.

The other two looked at Funnyman askance. They had not yet grown to hate him with a deep and burning hate. Later he was driven forth in a shower of messkits and hard language, whenever his mood tempted him to crack one of his self-styled bright sayings. When the outfit was in Germany they locked Funnyman in a box car bound to Russia, and he was never heard of again.

"Come off that seat, Belt, you're no better than any one else. We don't need any brake now. You're too —— ready with that brake, anyway. You're the cause of all this."

"Come offa there," said Dish Face bitterly.

Poor Belt descended at once. He was cramped anyway and wanted to get his feet on the ground.

They entered the outskirts of Chateau Thierry. There were a few French soldiers hanging about, advance agents of some headquarters, looking for billets perhaps, and some American telephone men. A soldier arose from the wayside and came toward the slat wagon. They recognized him as one of the battery, an agent of liaison, a *buscarer*, a searcher of battlefields, an eater of broken meats and a hanger-on at the kitchen. He was called the "Frog."

"This is the way," he called, "the Old Man sent me back for a guide."

On down the street they went, picking their way across piles of brick. This part of the city had not suffered much from the bombardment. The houses were still intact, and so was the furniture in them. What there was of loot that had any value was gone. Who had looted these homes? Not Sployd, or Haynes, or the Frog, nor yet Mott or the Funnyman. They searched them all, but some one had been before them. They cursed horribly at the infantry that break into a house and steal the things therein, before the artillery can get a chance.

NEAR the railroad station, opposite an abandoned engine, was an unexploded shell. A dud. It lay fairly in the center of the road, shimmering in the sun, in all its glory of red paint and brass fuse. It had a little shelter built over it, to warn teams to keep away. The little group at the rear of the slat wagon halted a moment to gaze, fascinated, at concentrated death.

"Look at the dud," cried the Frog, and he brought his walking stick down with all his might on that brass nose. Who has not been in an elevator, the operator of which started it quickly, and all one's insides seemed to hang to the ceiling, while the rest of him went down? Such was the sensation of the four goldbricks. They all simultaneously inhaled. It was some time before they could speak. An hour later the Frog reported to the battery commander that the detail with the slat wagon were all drunk and had tried to murder him. He looked it.

West of the city between Chery and Blesmes, the French had built a pontoon bridge across the Marne, and it was here, waiting their turn to cross, that the slat wagon caught up with the regiment. The Marne is a narrow river, with very high banks. In order to get down to the bridge, it was necessary to cut sloping runways, or ramps. The need for haste was great, hence the ramps were very steep as the engineers had no time to lengthen them. The guns and wagons were eased down the near bank with a rope around the rear axle, and every one in sight tailing on to it. The teams then crossed the teetering bridge, with the dismounted drivers leading them. On the other side, four or five extra teams hauled the gun up the far bank, pulled it to one side, the teams unhitched, and went down the bank to pull up the next load. One team unhitched from the string each time, and returned to its original gun or wagon, so that for every piece of rolling material that crossed the bridge, one pulled away from the far bank and went across the field to the road, so that there were always two or three extra teams available to help pull others up the bank. Of course, this process was very long, so that the slat wagon caught up with the battery and then had to wait an hour or so for its turn to cross.

"Come on," said Goose, "let's get away somewhere, and forget that instrument of torture."

Accordingly the four went down the road a ways and climbed a little knoll. Here they found Onorio, the instrument sergeant, and "Cut Glass," a silk-hat Irishman, who had ambitions to be an observer.

"Where are we goin' to camp tonight, Sergeant?" they asked.

He pointed across the river.

"See that little town there? That's Gland. And you can see the road going up the hill in back of it. At the top of that hill is Champillon Farm, which I have had the pleasure of shelling in my day. Now back of the farm is a ditch, where we will camp tonight."

"How do you know all that?" asked Goose.

"It's on the map, my boy," said Onorio.

"Oh, my back!" said Belt. "Look at that hill!"

The road led straight up the side of a steep hill, so that it had somewhat the appearance of a waterfall.

"Won't it be fun pushin' that slat wagon up that cliff?" said Funnyman, "Goose'll get some more blisters."

The prospect grew dark for these soldiers.

"What's going on down theah?" asked Cut Glass.

He talked like a Boston school teacher, which was what he was. All looked down at the road. The slat wagon was drawn up in the ditch, and men were loading boxes and cans into it.

"I can't see what that is," said Sployd, "but it's more stuff for us to unload tonight, after we've pushed it up that hill."

The faces of the goldbricks grew so long that Onorio and Cut Glass were fain to laugh.

"Cheer up," said Onorio, "never get discouraged your first hitch. Come on, Cut Glass, we gotta move. That's the last gun goin' over, now."

A ration train went across before the slat wagon got its chance, and while it stood waiting patiently in the long grass, the mind of Goose Mott was filled with thoughts of evil. Whenever his eye lighted on the big hump under the tarpaulin, where the new load had been piled, he cursed bitterly the unkind fate that had made him the member of a marching regiment. The wagon was deserted—the drivers had dismounted and were lying on their backs, smoking. No fear of those horses running away. Goose went and sat on the front wheel, whittling a piece of stick with a long French knife that he had. No one paid any attention to him.

"Come on with that slat wagon," called the engineer officer, who had charge of the bridge. "Look alive, now!"

The drivers mounted hastily, and a gang of men at the wheels rolled the wagon into position. Then they put on the ropes and it was slowly lowered down the ramp to the foot boards of the pontoon bridge.

"Good enough. Wait on the other side for the two teams from the other wagon."

The wagon rolled easily across the bridge. On the other side the helping teams hitched to the traces of those that were already attached to it. The goldbricks got to the wheels once more and prepared for the pull up the ramp. All save Goose, in whose heart was a fierce joy. The teams started scrambling up the bank.

"Hey!" yelled a driver. "The pole chains are undone!" *Snap!* "Look out!"

Several of the horses fell to their knees. The goldbricks leaped clear. With a glorious thunder the slat wagon ran backward down the ramp, struck the bridge with a resounding *bang*, and toppled into the water with a delicious splash. Confusion. Turmoil. The teams had been thrown off their balance by the sudden releasing of the load, and they showed their disgust with the proceedings as any respectable horses would. Language flew about freely. Every one rushed on to the bridge and gazed earnestly at the bubbles rising from the Marne, but nothing rose from that wagon. Excited officers ran about in a frenzy.

"How did it happen?"

"Who did that wagon belong to?"

"I hope it wasn't the one my bedding roll was on."

Shriek and shout and battle cry were of no avail, however. The slat wagon was gone from the ken of man with all its load.

The goldbricks looked at the muddy waters of the Marne, with the feeling of a man who has been thrown from a horse, rather scared, but glad it is all over, anyway. There was nothing they could do.

"You men had better rejoin your organization," said an officer. "You won't make anything any better by hanging around here."

The four went on up the road with a

strange feeling of content, following the three liberated teams.

"It wasn't our fault, anyway," said Sployd. "The traces broke, and away it went."

"Traces broke, my eye," said Goose. "Did you hear that fat-head yell that the pole chains were undone? I cut the traces almost through and undid the pole chains before we started over. There was no strain on the chains with all that gang holding her back with the rope, and no strain on the traces till they started up the bank. I made up my mind that I'd never unload that thing again."

An admiring silence fell on the other three.

The battery were at Champillon Farm, as Onorio had said it would be. The drivers had unharnessed and gone off somewhere to water the horses. The gunners were digging holes for the trail spades, and the instrument sergeant and a lieutenant were peering into a goniometer and howling strange words at each other. Smoke ascended cheerfully from the rolling kitchen. The four goldbricks entered unobtrusively and approached the kitchen.

"Where's the slat wagon?" called the mess sergeant.

"It fell in the brook," said Dish Face.

"Fell in the brook!"

The battery stopped its labors at the cry.

"Yes, fell in the brook, an' everything in it."

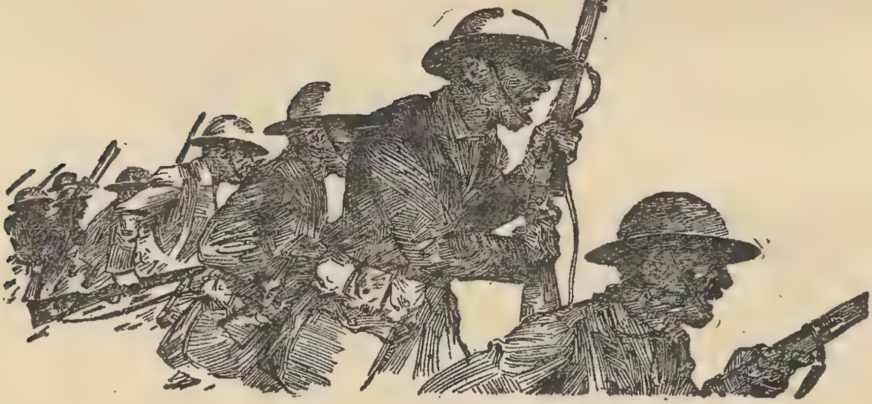
"My stars," said the mess sergeant. "Supreme undiluted gangrenous grief. All the chow this battery owns was in that wagon. We put it in when the ration cart broke, while we were waiting to cross. And no one has had a bite to eat since two this morning."

There was a wild howl, and the battery bore down upon the four, but they fled headlong into the woods.

There is a white straight road that runs through the forest of Barbillon northward to Fere en Tardenois. At dusk a man came trotting down its center. It was Goose Mott. A voice called to him from the ditch.

"Lie down, guy, lie down. Those are the German lines down there."

"It's the only place I'm safe," called the runner over his shoulder, and he continued on his way.



Thirteen Men and a Cock-eyed Mate

A Complete Novelette by Charles Victor Fischer

Author of "Cash Jack," "Frog," etc.

A SAIL gleamed on the horizon to eastward of the Island of Guam, off the village of Pago, one hot and hazy afternoon some thirty years ago. The twoscore of natives, spread out along the half-mile of fish-net, which, with its ends at widely separated points on the beach, formed a long crescent-shaped trap, paused in their task of working the net beachward and for some minutes, chattering like the monkeys which many of them resembled, watched the schooner. But she came in slowly, under sagging sails, for there was little wind; and the little brown men, growing impatient, resumed the more important task of running the net in.

Soon all was to-and-fro commotion and excitement along the beach of Pago. As the length of net reaching out into the water was shortened, by hauling in its ends, it was seen that the catch was a good one. A couple of tons of fish were trapped within the net and being slowly pushed up on the beach. Red snappers, silver kings, barracudas, bonitos, starfish, squid—well nigh every form and variety of sub-tropical marine life squirmed and blobbed about in the rapidly diminishing area of water enclosed within the net.

On the beach a half-mile to the southward squatted a lone young native, Enos Cruz. He was short, had broad and square shoulders, long muscular arms, a lithe tapering body, and short legs the calves and thighs of which were mounds of resilient muscles. His face was broad, of light brown color, with large cheek-bones, stubby features and almond-shaped black eyes that blazed fiercely. But over all there was a lean and hungry look about him which, quoth Cæsar, betokens the dangerous man. His cheeks were drawn, hollow, and his ribs showed.

Despite that he owned part of that net, having contributed in the making of it, Enoz Cruz was taking no part in the fishing today. In this matter of community fishing Enos had sworn off. For what was the use? he reasoned. As soon as the netful of trapped fish was beached, and the edibles sorted out, along would come the Spanish soldiers and appropriate the whole catch. What was left over, after the one hundred soldiers and half-dozen officers stationed at Pago had glutted themselves, would be returned to the natives who had caught them.

It was the way of the Spaniard. As it was in the West Indies, Mexico, the Philippines—the world around—so it was on the Island of Guam. The Spaniard took it for granted that God had peopled that patch of mountains and coconut trees with these little brown folk for the sole purpose of providing for and serving the Spaniard. They came, planted their banner on the island, and then planted their heels on the necks of its inhabitants. They taxed the air the natives breathed and compelled payment with blacksnakes, with the garrote, with bullets, with ants and molasses. They committed atrocities at which Nero of

Rome would have blushed. And they called themselves Christians.

Of course there were some good Spaniards on the island. But none of these was Lieutenant Ponzo, he of the short fat figure that came waddling duckwise along the beach towards Enos that afternoon. The sight of that Spaniard made Enos even redder in mind and more bitter in heart than he had been. The fact that a soldier, Ponzo's orderly, walked a short distance behind him, was all that checked Enos' wild impulse to sink his knife into Ponzo's black heart—an impulse which Enos had felt before.

As commanding officer of the detachment of soldiers at Pago, Lieutenant Ponzo was mayor of the town and also chief of police. Moreover, to him was entrusted the collecting of taxes.

Now Enos Cruz was behind in his tax, far behind.

He had been through a very discouraging run of hard luck. The last typhoon had destroyed more than half of his coconut grove, had broken down some trees and torn others up by the roots; an epidemic of pip had reduced his fifty egg-laying hens to a scant dozen; the wild dogs had made off with his nine suckling pigs, whereupon the mother of them died of a broken heart; the two acres of corn he had planted had gone dry in the recent drought—so that Enos had no produce with which to meet the Spanish extortions.

And this meant the calaboose. For Ponzo would hear no excuses. The native must either pay in produce or go to prison, join the work-gang.

These prisoners built roads and stone fortifications, every day in the week from dawn till dark. They worked under blacksnake whips as drayhorses work. Wherefore Enos had no hankering to hold talk with Lieutenant Ponzo. So he got up and started along the beach at a rapid catlike glide. But the Spanish army officer shouted his name.

Had he only himself to think of Enos would have taken it on the run. He could have easily gained the dense growth of coconut trees not far to the southward; and once in the jungle all the Spaniards on the island couldn't have found him. But Enos had the responsibility of a very young and very beautiful wife, Teresa by name. So he halted and waited.

THE Spaniard came, snorting, blowing, perspiring. And yet, to the bewilderment of Enos, he smiled and addressed him in civil tones.

"Well, Cruz," he began in Spanish, "it is a hot day."

"I can not pay my tax," Enos anticipated him, his almond eyes narrow with suspicion, "My hens have died; my pigs—"

"Ah!" the fat Spaniard checked him, snapping forth from his cuff a large crimson-bordered handkerchief of white silk. He was the last word in sartorial elegance. His shirt was of pea-green silk; a high-peaked, wide-brimmed hat of peanut straw covered his sleek, black-haired head; his short trousers, of black velvet, were so skin-tight that they appeared in peril of bursting over his bologna-like thighs and hams. He wore black silk stockings, and slippers of black velvet with silver buckles.

"And have I troubled Cruz about his tax?"

"No," Enos admitted. "But then I have been most sick with worry. For a month now my wife Teresa has had nothing in belly but fish and coconut. She is most deathly sick with the want of better food. Each day she grows thinner of body and more hollow of eye. And what can I do? I have no corn, no rice. The few hens I have left lay no eggs, and are so sick with disease that I fear to kill them for the meat of them which may be poisoned and cause death."

Ponzo eyed him with his small cunning black eyes, twisting his glistening black mustache and chuckling deep down in his paunch.

"It will be most hard for Teresa if I must go to prison," Enos went on. "She will grow sicker and sicker with thinness and loneliness, and finally die of thinness and loneliness. Then I too will die, for I am most sick with the love of her. If I could have time—"

"Time?" Ponzo repeated absently. "Ah, yes; time, to be sure. One can do much, if one has time."

He fell silent, his crafty eyes on the schooner—she being now anchored about a mile offshore.

"I see we have the *Lulu Ray* back with us," he broke off. "Which means another drinking bout this evening."

Chuckling, he added—

"I wonder has Captain Black some more pearls to game for."

This in reference to the *Lulu Ray's* former call at Guam, when Ponzo, after getting her captain, one Jim Black, drunk, had fleeced him of a handful of small pearls at poker.

"Señor Ponzo could grant me time to pay my tax," interposed Enos. "I grow sicker and sicker with the worry of prison."

The Spanish officer continued looking at the *Lulu Ray*.

"The American is strong and can fight, but is not shrewd," he observed complacently. "And when he drinks wine he becomes a very foolish fool."

Saying which, Ponzo cast his eyes along the beach. They came to rest on a native's canoe, drawn up on the sand a short distance away.

"Cruz," he said abruptly, "you will do an errand for me. Take yonder canoe and paddle out to the *Lulu Ray*. Tell Captain Black that Lieutenant Ponzo sends his compliments and requests him to dinner at nine o'clock this evening."

"My tax—"

"—— your tax! Do as I command and you will not go to prison!"

At a clap of Ponzo's fat hands, his orderly danced up, saluted and clicked heels before him.

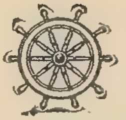
"Go to my house," he snapped at the private, "and tell my cook to make up a large basket of lunch—a roast fowl, a hindquarter of the suckling pig killed yesterday, some salad, eggs, pineapples, bread and cake and two bottles of wine. This you will take to the house of Enos Cruz and present to his young wife with the compliments of Lieutenant Ponzo. Go!"

He turned to Enos. The native blinked and gaped at him. This miraculous change in the brute-natured Ponzo was beyond Enos' comprehension.

"Well?" The Spaniard stood with his fat hands on his fat hips. "Will you obey my command, or must I countermand that order and place you under arrest instead?"

Enos was away on the gallop toward the canoe down on the beach. Laying hold of its gunwales he ran it out into the water, and with a leap was aboard and paddling for the *Lulu Ray*.

"At nine o'clock!" Ponzo shouted after him.



NEVER before, in the many years he had captained and owned the little schooner *Lulu Ray*, had Jim Black faced such a provoking situation as he did that afternoon, standing at the taffrail looking shoreward. Black was a man in a hole. Yet a grin shone through his heavy brown whiskers, and a whimsical light flickered in his big brown eyes. For the situation had its ludicrous side.

Black had no crew. A few days before, only a few hours out of Yap Island, one of the ten Kanakas comprising his crew had been killed by a marlinespike accidently dropped from aloft. An hour later, another Kanaka had fallen from the bowsprit into the sea; and before the ship could be brought to and a boat lowered, a shark had pulled him down. That evening the remaining eight Kanakas had held much whispered talk up forward. At midnight they deserted in a body, dropping the longboat into the water on the run, while the Swede mate, Peterson, was below waking Black for the mid-watch. When Black and Peterson came up on deck, there wasn't another soul besides themselves and the cat aboard. The ship was holding steady on her course with the wheel lashed.

Not that Black was a bully skipper. He was anything but that. You would have combed the Pacific in vain for a more kindhearted captain. But he did have the look of a wild, uncouth and hard-boiled roughneck, with his five feet and eleven inches of leather-skinned brawn, his heavy growth of brown whiskers, and his long, unkempt brown hair, which had not been cut in years. There was long brown hair on his chest too. He was a big and powerful and case-hardened man to look at. Many of those who knew him said he was too soft-hearted.

The cause of his crew's desertion stood at Black's side, through a pair of binoculars watching the to-and-fro commotion attending the hauling in of that community-owned fish-net over on the beach of Pago. But how in the name of common sense Victor Peterson could see anything through a pair of straight-tubed binoculars—some one else will have to elucidate. For this sturdy, bald-headed, middle-aged Swede was wofully and forlornly cock-eyed. And it was nothing other than the fact of Peterson's being cock-eyed that had sent those eight Kanaka seamen over the side and heading back to Yap Island in the *Lulu Ray's* longboat those few evenings before.

Black had shipped Peterson as mate at Yap, never dreaming of the demoralizing effect the fact of his eyes not being strictly mates would have on his crew of black and brown men. Of course, knowing the psychology of South Sea islanders as he did, their fears and superstitions, he had known that a cross-eyed mate would be none too welcome. But he knew Vic Peterson to be a competent mate and a whole-souled man as well; and these qualifications overrode everything else with Jim Black.

Black had observed and laughed at the sinister looks among his Kanakas, the morning Peterson stepped aboard and they noted his ocular defect. But they would soon get over that, he thought. And probably they would have. But then, that very afternoon those two deaths had to occur, one close on the heels of the other. Small wonder that the superstitious and fanciful imaginations of the remaining eight Kanakas had invested Peterson with Satan's evil mantle and taken to the waves.

As for Peterson, he didn't as yet know the cause of that midnight exodus. It was his first experience with a black crew. Black hadn't enlightened him, knowing that the Swede would only brood over the affair—which wouldn't have helped. The two of them had worked the ship up from Yap—they were bound for San Francisco with a cargo of tobacco from the Philippines, and copra from Yap—to a point eastward of Guam. Then, in the hope of picking up a native crew, Black had put in to Pago.

"From what I know of these natives," he said to Peterson, "we hadn't ought to have any trouble shipping a dozen or so. Those Spaniards over there treat them like rats, and they'll be only too glad to get off the island."

"And are you t'inking to be going ashore this afternoon?" asked the Swede.

Black looked at him thoughtfully, soberly, and yet with a light of amusement in his eyes.

"I don't know, Vic," he answered. "Maybe I'd better wait till after dark. You see, here's the hickey: A couple of months ago I stopped here and got mixed in a poker game with a Spanish army officer. Ponzo is the name of the bird. I let him think he had me drunk, and then let him skin me out of a handful of fake pearls. He had a deck of marked cards. That handful of fakes cost him about two thousand *pesetas*—around four hundred dollars. I did it just for the fun of the thing. It was easy graft. You see, he put up Spanish money and I put up pearls. I simply stowed his cash as fast as I pulled it in, and kept pushing out more pearls. I pushed out pearls as if I had a whole shipload of 'em. He thought at the finish he had stung me for about twenty thousand dollars worth of genuine pearls. But the truth is I gold-bricked him with a couple of dollars worth of imitation pearls for two thousand *pesetas*."

With his left eye trained on Pago, to his right, and his right eye trained on an approaching canoe to his left, Peterson only grinned.

"You see," Black continued, "what's got me guessing is whether or no that Spaniard ever found out they were fake pearls. If he tried to sell any of them, he certainly did find out. Chances are he did. And in that case it wouldn't do for me to chance going ashore in daylight. You know what a Spaniard is. He's liable to take a shot at me from a window—or have one of his sneaks do it."

Peterson took a chew of snuff.

"Dere iss no doubt dere would be —— popping if he knowss you have cheat him," he remarked. "But I say, Yim," he broke off pointing, "here'ss a native in a canoe coming."

Black held his binoculars to his eyes.

"Darn fine looking lad," he observed, as he brought the glasses to focus on the splendidly muscled and thewed body of the native paddling the approaching canoe. "Make a fine deckhand for us."

"Maybe we can hyponize him to stay a while."

"We'll try."

But the first words of Enos Cruz sent that hope flying.

"I have a message for Señor Captain Black," he shouted in Spanish when he was yet fifty yards away. "And I must hurry back," he added, "for my wife Teresa, who is most beautiful and pleasing to the eye of a Spaniard, is alone with herself, and the Spaniards in Pago are many."

"Oh, ——," Black growled. "No use trying for him. He's married."

The canoe skewed in alongside. Enos didn't disembark; he delivered Ponzo's invitation standing up in his boat, holding to the schooner's side. Black turned and looked at his mate.

"What do you think about it, Vic? Sounds all right, eh? Again it might be all wrong. He might or he might not be wise to those fake pearls. Maybe the fox is just trying to get me over there tonight for the purpose of handing me a dose of carbolic acid, or a knife in the back. Note that he makes the dinner time nine o'clock—after dark. He don't want anyone to see me going into his house."

"Tell him to go to ——," said Peterson.

The suggestion appealed to Black's sense of humor, but not to his reason. He and Peterson were only two against the one hundred Spanish soldiers in Pago. He grinned and shook his head. Then he switched back to Spanish and spoke to Enos.

"Come aboard, lad, and have a good drink."

"But my wife Teresa is alone, and the Spaniards—"

"Oh, what difference a few minutes," Black cut in. "Come aboard and tell me some things I want to know, and we'll send you back home with a boatload of useful things."

Reluctantly, with a glint of suspicion in his black eyes, Enos clambered up aboard. The three of them then went below to the cabin, and sat down at a table. Black poured two stiff drinks of stiff whisky, one for himself and one for Enos; then he pushed the bottle over to Peterson, who poured himself a tumblerful.

"LAD, I want a crew," Black began. "Do you know twelve Chamorros who would like to go to America? Fine long sail, good ship, plenty good food, lots of sleep in good bunks, money with which to buy knives and tools and silk dresses to bring back to their Teresas and Marys—"

"And I could take my wife Teresa along?" Enos cut in. "She is most quick and skillful with the needle and can cook. Also she is most bird-throated in song."

Black smiled but shook his head.

"Sorry, lad, but this is an all-he ship. I've got nothing against women specially, only that they're a —— nuisance and I'm happier when there's none of 'em around me. I can't stand their brainless chatter."

"Ah but, Señor Captain," Enos persisted, "my Teresa does not talk much with the mouth, like most females. She is most silent with the mouth. Yes. You will not know she is on your ship if you do not see her. She makes less noise than the shadow of the mountain deer."

"But you see, lad," Black held on, "life aboard a ship like this is not for a woman. She would grow homesick for her mother and father, sisters—"

"Teresa has no mother and no father, who both died many typhoons ago. And her sister Rose has not spoken to Teresa since five days before the last typhoon, when Rose stole Teresa's shawl, a shawl for which I had given Rose and her husband three hens. Yes. Rose stole back the shawl from Teresa because the three hens were sick with pip and died of pip."

"But she would be homesick just the same."

"Just the same she would not be sick for the home, Señor Captain Black, because we have no home. The Queen of Spain owns my little one-room shack, as well as my two acres of dried-up corn and my few coconut trees. The tax is more than I can pay, and I am sick with the worry of it all. If Captain Black would take us along we would be most sick with happiness."

A short silence. Black pondered the proposition. Then Peterson swallowed a mouthful of snuff-juice and spoke up.

"I will tell you, Yim, a woman iss not dey worstest t'ing in dey woruld to be having on a ship, so long as she doess not yabber too much wis her mouth."

Black eyed his mate in amusement for a few moments.

"The —— you say," he said.

Then he turned and again spoke in Spanish to Enos.

"I'll tell you what, lad. If you'll go ashore and get me a crew of twelve Chamorros, strong, lively young men between eighteen and thirty-five years old. Do it quietly, understand; don't let the Spaniards know—"

"No, no, no!" Enos broke in, bright of eye and beaming of countenance now. "They would put me in prison! The Spaniards do not want any natives to leave the island, because that would leave so many less to slave for them."

"That's the idea. Get twelve Chamorros

together; tell them to come out to the *Lulu Ray*, one and two at a time, between midnight and dawn tomorrow. They must all be single men—all but yourself. Do that and you may bring your wife aboard. We'll make you bosun—boss of the gang. You and your wife will have a stateroom, and everything will be fine."

Enos sprang up out of his chair. His broad face shone like a ball of polished brown ivory set with two sparkling black diamonds. He had suddenly become charged with new life. For to him this was a heavenly prospect. The idle day-dreams, the hopeless hopes of yesterday sprang into life and welled up and flooded his wild young brain.

Out from under the Spanish heel! No longer the black apprehension of prison for non-payment of tax. Vast vistas of billowy blue and gray and sapphire, deep and awful and fraught with peril, but which led to other worlds and freedom, stretched away before his mind's eye. Drunk with the picture of it he stood for a few moments, his eyes rolling till only the whites showed. Then with the sinewy litheness of a tiger he glided forward to the companionway. There he turned.

"Señor Captain Black, I am most sick with happiness!" he cried out. "Twelve young Chamorro men who are strong and nimble of muscle and limb shall you have by the dawn of tomorrow!"

"Wait, lad." Black pulled out a drawer under the table and out of it took a 38-caliber revolver. "Do you know how to shoot one of these?"

Enos did, having once been houseboy for a Spanish army officer who, in a drunken humor one evening, had shown him.

"All right." Black handed him the pistol. "It's loaded. Put it in your pocket. You may need it. If those Spaniards over there find out you're going around picking up a crew for me, they're liable to try to arrest you. If they do—"

Enos showed with his eyes and his teeth that he would follow the unuttered advice to the letter and with pleasure, if necessary.

They went up on deck. Enos dropped down in his canoe and pushed off.

"Tell Lieutenant Ponzo I can't come to dinner this evening," Black called after him; "that I have a sore foot and can't walk—but will try to come tomorrow."

BLACK came on deck at midnight to relieve Peterson. It was a quiet, daylight night. Like a great white bull's-eye the moon rode high over the mountains to the eastward, bathing their lofty peaks in a ghostly flood of silver. A shooting star blazed a white streak across the vast and august assemblage overhead. The tops of the coconut trees fringing the beach were a tremulous mass of white and silver and gold. A warm, gentle breeze shimmered the water. The only noises to be heard were the lapping of the water against the ship's side, the occasional splash of a fish blobbing up, and now and then the faint far-off baying of a wild dog.

Peterson was about to go below and turn in when from some distance off in the water came a splash. They thought it was the nose made by a fish. But no; a moment later they caught the unmistakable gleam of a paddle.

"Here comes the head of the parade," Black said. "One of our new crew, no doubt."

They waited. When the canoe was within a hundred yards Black hailed. To their surprize the answering voice was a woman's.

"I will go to ——," declared Peterson.

The canoe came alongside. Black leaned over and reached down. Two small, soft hands clutched his powerful wrist. He lifted her up aboard with giant-like ease.

"Señor Captain Black," she said in hurried, excited tones, "I am most sick with the sadness of my troubles!"

Black took her hand and led her across the deck and below to the cabin. Peterson trailed along behind.

In the dim glow of the three oil lanterns which hung from the cabin's overhead bulkhead she stood before them trembling, shy as a fawn and with all the graceful curves and softness of a fawn. She was little more than a girl, about to mature to womanhood, a wonderfully pretty creature, in an Oriental way, having small, delicate features, large, lustrous black eyes glowing with fiery expression and long, raven-black hair that hung loose and reached far down below her waist. Her skin was of light brown color, clear and smooth. Small and slender, supple and soft, yet there was an erectness and sedateness in her carriage, as she suffered Black to lead her to a chair, which gave her a queenly air, despite the frayed and threadbare raggedness of the waist and skirt she wore.

"I am the wife of Enos Cruz—he who came on your ship in the afternoon of yesterday," she began, in a mixture of Spanish and Chamorro. The latter is a dialect of Malay, corrupted by Tagal and Spanish. "And he is now in prison!"

The girl paused. Peterson took a chew of snuff. Black nodded encouragement.

"In the afternoon of yesterday the Spanish pig Ponzo sent my husband out to your ship," she went on. "Soon afterward by one of his soldiers he sent to our house a large basket of food. Though I hate Ponzo, and liked not to eat from him, so sick was I with emptiness of stomach that I ate much and fast, thinking the food was payment for the errand which a native boy had told me Enos was doing for Ponzo. When I had eaten to contentment of my stomach and was most full I lay down on my mat to sleep till Enos came home.

"I was waked—" She spat on the deck in disgust. "I was waked to the sight of that fat face which I most hate. Ponzo bent over me. I was much frightened, for he was most beastly of face and wicked of eye. I tried to scream, but with his fat hand he covered my mouth. I tried to roll over and escape from him, but with his other fat hand he held me down by the throat till I choked and could not breathe. I tried to kick, but he sat his fat piggishness on me.

" 'Give yourself to me,' spoke he in my ear, and at the same time tried to bite my ear, 'give yourself to me, and your husband will not go to prison. He will have no tax to pay. I am powerful. My word is the law of Pago.'

"I jerked my head to one side, so that his fat hand no longer covered my mouth, and then spat in his face. He grew most red of face and loud with piggish grunts, and pressed the harder at my throat. He pressed so hard that I feared he would squeeze my eyes out. But my hands were free, and with my fingers I scratched at his snaky eyes causing blood to flow down his fat face, so that he had to take his hand from my throat to protect his fat face. And then did I roll over and escape.

"I ran out of the house and away into a coconut grove, where from high up in a tree I watched our house. Ponzo did not pursue me. I saw him come out of our house, wiping the blood from his face, which my finger nails had made most bloody. He walked up a back street to his own house.

"For a long time I sat up in the tree waiting for the return of Enos. At last I saw him returning from your ship in the canoe. Just before he landed I began calling to him, squeaking as the young wild pig squeaks—which is the way Enos and I call to each other in the woods. He came.

"When I told Enos what had happened he grew most hellishly mad with thirst for the blood of Ponzo. He took out the pistol you had given him.

" 'Teresa,' spoke he, 'for that will I kill the black-hearted Ponzo. He is most full of evil and should die. But first I have a promise to fulfill. I must get together twelve of the youngest and strongest Chamorro men in Pago. Between midnight and the dawn of tomorrow these must go out to the *Lulu Ray*, where they will be received by the great and wise and kind American captain with the long hair and beard and big eyes, and his white brother on whose head is no hair and whose northern eye looks south and southern eye looks north. This done, I will go to Ponzo and shoot him with the bullets in this pistol. Then will you and I go out to the *Lulu Ray*, where we are to live from now on.'

"We went from house to house. Many young men were most glad to go far away in the *Lulu Ray*, but their mothers and fathers and sweethearts forbade them. So we were a long time going from house to house and went to many houses. Just the same Enos talked and talked. And among our people Enos is a most fiery talker with his mouth. All our boys and young men and old men look upward to him as a mind most wise with wisdom. Yes. So well did he talk that your twelve Chamorro men will come on your ship before the dawn of this day."

"Good!" Black put in.

"The dark of night was come when we finished," Teresa hurried on. "Then Enos said to me, 'Now, Teresa, will I go and shoot bullets into Ponzo.'

"I was most glad, for I wanted to see Ponzo die. But this I was not to see. When we drew near Ponzo's house, which faces on the plaza, Enos whispered me to wait for him in the shadow of another house not far from Ponzo's.

"But some evil spirit told one of Ponzo's soldiers that Enos was about to slay Ponzo. When Enos stole up to Ponzo's house this soldier followed him.

"For a long time I waited to hear the noise of Enos' pistol, and then the noise of his running feet. But no shots were fired. I heard noise; but it was the angry voice of the Spanish soldier shouting for help. And then suddenly the street and plaza were alive with running soldiers.

"I waited a short time longer. Then I lost patience and with much swiftness ran along the dark street. But when I got to Ponzo's house several soldiers had Enos under arrest and were marching him to the calaboose. I tried to fight my way through them to Enos, but one of them struck me in the face with his fist causing me dizziness and the seeing of many stars. And then came darkness.

"I awoke lying in the grass on the edge of the Plaza. One of my cousins, John Perez, bent over me. John is Ponzo's houseboy. He told me all that had happened.

"When Enos stole across the grass in front of Ponzo's house to a window looking in upon Ponzo's dining-room, the soldier who had been following him crept up behind him as a cat creeps up behind a bird. Either some evil spirit robbed Enos of his keenness of eye and ear, or he was so eager to kill Ponzo that he forgot all else. He found a barrel in Ponzo's yard. This he placed beneath the window of Ponzo's dining-room and stood upon. Through the window he saw Ponzo, who had grown tired of waiting for Señor Captain Black to join him, and was seated at dinner alone. Enos drew his pistol and pointed it at Ponzo. Then the Spanish soldier behind him kicked over the barrel on which Enos stood, so that Enos would have remained standing in the air, if he had not fallen."

BLACK'S swarthy face—or that portion of it uncovered with hair—became a mass of tense and quivering bands and bunches of muscles and wrinkles. The twitching temples betrayed rapid heart-action. The bushy eyebrows met in a deep furrow above the bridge of the prominent nose; two less deep furrows creased the spacious forehead; and the eyelids contracted over the big blazing irises, causing the portions of flesh below the eyes to bunch up in tiny mounds. It was the face of a strong man—a physical giant and an intellectual giant. But just now there was in it a look of helplessness. He suggested the glaring lion behind the bars.

The task of wresting a prisoner from those Spaniards called for more resource of imagination than Jim Black just then had to draw from. The calaboose was always heavily guarded at night; and in the daytime the prisoners were put to hard labor out on the road, with rifles and whips all around them.

"If Señor Captain Black will give me some pistols," the girl added, "I will go and hide myself in a tree by the side of the road where the prisoners are working. Then in the morning I will shoot down to death all the Spanish guards, and thus make my husband a free man."

"I will go to ——!" Peterson blurted out with a snort of laughter. Black smiled faintly.

"You couldn't do that, little señora," he admonished. "One of them would shoot you first."

"Just the same would I try," she returned. "For surely will Ponzo have my Enos put to death—and not by the garrote or the rifle either, but eaten alive by ants! Yes. They will smear molasses over his face so that the ants will eat his eyes out, and also fill his mouth with molasses, so they will go inside of him and eat from his inside outward! Ponzo enjoys seeing this. And what if they do shoot me? Far better the quick death of a bullet than the most long sickness of a sad heart, which is just as painful as being eaten alive by black ants."

But Black only shook his head.

"Little señora," he said in low, kindly tones, "you leave this for a man to handle. It is not a woman's work. You just remain on my ship. I'll give you a stateroom with a clean soft bed to sleep in. And have no fear." His eyes blazed again and his voice grew harsh. "Before I'll let them put your lad to death I'll plant dynamite under that barracks and blow every Spaniard in it to ——!"

The girl reached impulsively across the table and grasped one of Black's great gnarled paws.

"Señor Captain Black is most great and strong and wise with greatness and strength and wisdom!" she cried out, and then burst forth in tears. For a woman is a woman, always and everywhere.

THE first of Black's new crew of Chamorros arrived at two o'clock that morning. And from then on they continued to arrive, one every fifteen minutes, some in canoes, some swimming. In the light of an oil lantern back on the cabin hatch hood, Black entered in the ship's log the name of each little brown man, his age and also other data pertaining to kith and kin; then he took each one forward and assigned him to a bunk in the forecastle, into which each little brown man plunged without comment and forthwith joined in the chorus of terrific noises issuing up out of the other, already occupied, bunks.

"No consumptives in that gang," Black mused, sitting aft on the port bulwarks listening to the enormous volumes of discord that issued back to him. Snore! Never had he heard the like of such ear-splitting outpourings of lung-power. It was like listening to a quintet composed of an angry bear, a sick pig, a broken-hearted cow, a hungry jackass and a fog-horn—the whole accompanied by a Chinese orchestra.

With the first faint premonition of dawn came the last of the dozen.

"Counting the lad over in the calaboose, that makes thirteen," Black laughed to himself. "Thirteen men and a cock-eyed mate."

Daylight came, but Black was unaware of it, so engrossed was he with the problem of getting Enos Cruz out of Spanish clutches. This was a hard nut to crack. He could form no definite plan. Several ideas came to him, but all were far-fetched and impracticable. Besides, everything hinged on that little joker of a question: Had Ponzo ever learned the truth about those imitation pearls? If he hadn't, there were a dozen ways of getting the lad out of the calaboose. But if Ponzo had discovered the deception, there seemed little hope; in fact Black would then have to watch his own step. For Ponzo was a power in Pago, and Black was but one American thousands of miles from America.

Between those two horns Black wavered until sunrise. Did Ponzo know, or did he not know? There was only one way to find out: Go ashore and pay Ponzo a call. And having decided to do this, Black went forward and roused out his new crew.

They responded promptly, to a man—the proverbial new broom. They came up on deck and squatted in a group outside of the galley, jabbering in subdued tones, their black eyes blinking about them and above them, like so many frightened monkeys. After giving them a careful scrutiny Black selected the two with the highest foreheads and put these to work getting breakfast. The rest he turned to at scrubbing down the deck and restoring something like shipshape conditions.

In the mid-forenoon, after a long, earnest talk with his mate and the native girl, Black jumped down in the wherry and pushed off for Pago. Over there he beached his boat and then set out for the central section of the town. He looked more like a Texas cattle owner than a sailor, with his broad-brimmed tan felt hat, leather leggings, light gray suit and big bandanna round his neck; and his long hair and beard lent color to this effect.

Pago was not much of a town to stroll about in. In the center was a public square, or plaza, where all the big events such as public floggings and executions were staged; facing this on one side stood a Catholic church; on another a row of army officers' bungalows; on a third side was the large barracks building, which served as a courthouse, soldiers' quarters and prison. Outlying this section was a labyrinth of crooked and foul-smelling alleys, built up with thatched-roof shacks and hovels surrounded by dirty, garbage-strewn yards in which dirt-crusted and dirty-nosed naked children squealed and romped about with mangy dogs and evil stinking pigs.

Black had not forgotten that his excuse for declining Ponzo's invitation the evening before was a sprained ankle. Whether Cruz had delivered his reply to Ponzo or not, it might be well, he thought, to play up to that lie; so he limped slightly as he walked through the dirty alleys of Pago toward the plaza.

He found the plaza a scene of some activity this morning. Many natives stood about. The attractive force was out in the center of the square. Six native prisoners, under the supervision and persuasion of three Spanish soldiers with long, whistling whips, the latter backed up by an outer ring of other soldiers with rifles, were erecting some crude sort of platform. Inquiring of a native, Black learned that upon this platform a native was to be put to death by the garrote.

"When?" Black asked.

The native shrugged and looked away across the square toward the largest in the row of officers' bungalows—Ponzo's house. Following the direction of his gaze Black saw the sleek Ponzo, dazzling in a bright-red kimono, sitting in a deep wicker chair on his front porch, with a tall bottle on the table beside him and a cigaret protruding from his black mustache.

With the brim of his big felt hat down low, Black watched him. He wanted Ponzo to see him. He didn't have to wait long. He saw the Spaniard suddenly stiffen in his chair, for a moment sit staring across the square at him, then clap his fat hands. In response his native houseboy appeared at his side. To the boy Ponzo spoke a few hurried words, simultaneously pointing across the square to where Black stood. Then the houseboy salaamed low, dodged the foot Ponzo swung at him, and then came galloping across the plaza to where Black was.

"Señor Lieutenant Ponzo would be most sick with pleasure would Señor Captain Black drink deep of the wine with him," was the way Black interpreted the native's Spanish and Chamorro mixture.

* * *

PONZO arose pompously, with outstretched hand, as Black limped up the stairs of his porch.

"The foot, Captain Black, the foot?" he inquired solicitously, speaking in English.

"Only a sprain, Lieutenant," Black answered, falling into the chair which the houseboy had brought. "I thought you knew. Didn't your native messenger tell you?—didn't the nigger deliver my reply to your invitation last evening?"

"Your reply!" Ponzo's black eyes snapped. "He brought me back a pistol loaded with bullets! He would have shot me as I awaited your coming, Captain Black!"

Black stared at him in perfectly feigned astonishment. Smiling suavely, in tones of blended censure and conciliation, Ponzo added—

"Ah, Captain Black, you should never give firearms to these natives."

Black scowled darkly. "Did that —— nigger say I gave him a pistol?"

"No-no-no. Indeed no. He would tell nothing. But then he had the pistol when he returned from your ship."

"If he got it from my ship he stole it. Why, do you think, lieutenant, that I'd be crazy enough to give one of these monkeys a gun?"

And deep down in him Black chuckled, as he noted the flash of relief that came over Ponzo's face at these words. The Spaniard sat up; a grin played over the twitching folds of his fat face, his teeth flashed white beneath his black mustache and his shifty eyes danced up and down over Black's huge, sprawled-out frame. Finally he broke into a laugh, a hysterical, mirthless laugh, and then let the cat out of the bag.

"I feared Captain Black bore me ill-will, for winning his pearls on his former visit here."

For a moment Black glowered at him; then he burst forth in a roar of laughter.

"——! And you thought I gave the —— nigger the gun to come over and shoot you with?"

"No-no-no-no, Captain Black!" Ponzo stammered, blood-red with embarrassment. "I—Captain Black does not—" and he continued to stammer an incoherent jumble which meant nothing and only caused Black to laugh the louder.

But it wasn't the Spaniard's discomfort that Black was laughing at. The joker in this situation was that each was wondering did the other suspect his treachery. Black saw now that the Spaniard had been as much on pins and needles concerning that poker game as he himself had. That marked deck of cards—which Black had surreptitiously slipped into his pocket that night when they finished playing—had obviously kept Ponzo sitting on a hot seat.

"That's not the first fortune I've lost in pearls," Black said easily. For he felt easy now. He knew that he held the upper hand. Ponzo hadn't attempted to sell any of those pearls, and therefore didn't know as yet that he had been gold-bricked.

Ponzo turned and roared to the houseboy: "Come come, thief! A bottle! Another glass! Quick!—or by the head of Nero I'll have you taken out on the plaza and fanned till you'll not be able to squat for a month!"

"Here's to the death of the —— nigger that tried to murder you," Black toasted.

"Which will occur tomorrow morning," Ponzo replied, with the nonchalance of one announcing his intention of making away with a troublesome cat. "I have already sent the execution papers to Agana for the governor's approval."

They quaffed down their wine.

"You handle 'em quick, don't you," Black observed. "Does he get no trial?"

"Trial! A Chamorro? Would you trouble to try a dog that had bitten you? Indeed no, Captain Black. He dies at my command. He must be made an example of. It is the only way to keep these dogs docile and obedient. Quick justice."

Black nodded assent.

"Quite right, Lieutenant, quite right, "he said, looking now out toward the center of the plaza where the prisoners were building the platform. He added:

"I must witness this execution. I've seen men hanged, shot, guillotined—but your garrote—"

"Oh, it is a quick, painless death, Captain Black. Too quick and painless, for these dogs. You see that platform they are raising? On it will be a seat, with an upright post against the back of it. To this the dog will be firmly secured. The garrote, which is a brass collar, is attached to the post at a height where it can be clamped round the dog's neck. It is all done like that—" snapping his fingers. "The garrote is fastened round his neck. A screw passes through the back of the garrote. At my command the executioner will quickly turn this screw, so that the point of it pierces the back of the dog's neck and passes through, touching the base of his brain. He shivers and groans and is gone."

"Too easy, too easy, Lieutenant," Black said gruffly. "Why don't you torture the —— nigger to death?"

Ponzo snapped his fingers and leaned forward, his black eyes sparkling with a light of diabolic glee.

"We are two men of one mind, Captain Black. Indeed yes, torture him; burn out his eyes, cut off his ears, and then feed him to a barrelful of ants—"

His voice broke. The satanic grin gave way to a scowling leer.

"But what can we do, with such a water-blooded governor as we have here now, Captain Black?" he went on. "No longer may we commandants deal with these native dogs at our own discretion! In times gone if a native failed to remove his hat when passing a Spanish soldier he received a hundred lashes; five hundred, if he so passed an officer. But now, under the regime of our present governor, we are allowed to administer only fifty lashes! Think of it! And no longer are we permitted to plait our whips with wire!"

"——'s bells," growled Black, lifting his second glass of wine. "Here's to the death of the chicken-hearted governor."

IT SOON became manifest to Black that Ponzo was trying to get him drunk. The Spaniard kept filling Black's glass as fast as he emptied it—which was pretty fast. Black smiled inwardly and humored him along, acting up to his part with a rapid-fire torrent of ribald jokes and anecdotes and occasional snatches of scurrilous song. Ponzo laughed and applauded, the while eyeing his visitor cunningly. When the houseboy brought the fourth bottle the Spaniard suggested a game of poker, adding:

"No doubt Captain Black would like satisfaction. I still have his pearls."

To which Black shook his head and replied:

"No, Lieutenant, I came ashore for another purpose this morning. I want about a quart jar full of those black ants—the kind that bite like ——."

Ponzo batted his eyes in crafty and wicked anticipation.

"I've got a nigger Kanaka aboard that I want to make an example of," Black went on. "A couple of days ago he threw a knife that missed my left ear by a hair.

"It was like this, Lieutenant: I'd taken a couple of females aboard down at Yap—half-castes, both of 'em, fine lookers, soft and slim. Anyhow this nigger Kanaka begins makin' eyes at one of 'em, the slim one—the one I'd picked out for my Swede mate; but he draws the color line, see. I let the nigger go a while, then handed him a clout in the jaw. That's how he came to throw his knife at me.

"You know the rest, of course: I knocked the muzzler down and put him in irons. He's still in irons. The point is, I've got a half-dozen other Kanakas aboard, and if I don't make an example of this bird I'm liable to have a mutiny on my hands. I could heave him to the sharks, of course, or shoot him, or trice him up to the gaff and let him wiggle it out in the sunshine—but, ——'s bells, I want him to die in a way that'll make the rest of 'em remember."

Again Ponzo snapped his fingers.

"I repeat, Captain Black, we are two men of one mind!"

"I figure I'll do it this way," Black continued: "I'll lash the nigger down hard and fast in one of these native canoes, smear him all over with molasses, then dump a jarful of ants in the boat and shove him off—"

"Fine, Captain Black!"

"—on the ebb tide," Black finished.

Ponzo had listened to this as a snake listens to the enchanting strains of soft music, his glittering black irises rolling high on the balls, his mustache bristling and his fat face glistening all over with greasy sweat.

"Indeed Captain Black is most thorough," he commented. "But the ants—he must have ants." He turned and clapped for the houseboy.

"Take a large glass jar and go out in the woods and fill it with black ants," he commanded.

"It will take only a little while," he turned and said to Black. "He will put a little molasses in the jar and place it beside an ant heap. It will be full of ants in a few moments. Ah—and these two wenches," he broke off, "you still have them on board?"

"Yes," Black answered. "But I've got to get rid of one—the slim one. You see, I brought her aboard thinkin' that Swede mate of mine would like the looks of her. I'd heard him say he was strong for slim ones. Then what does the —— squarehead do but get up on his Swedish dignity and inform me he draws the color line. That leaves me with a female to get rid of." He hesitated. "Do you want her?"

Ponzo licked his mustache, rolled his eyes and grinned a very simple and foolish grin.

"Tell you, Lieutenant: Come out aboard with me and take a look at her. Have dinner with me. Then this afternoon you can witness the fun when I feed that nigger to the ants."

Click, went Ponzo's fingers and he shot up out of the chair.

"Done, Captain Black, done! I go now to dress."

He started to enter the house, but halted in the doorway.

"I wonder, Captain Black—could we—ah—" He paused, fingering his mustache. "It might be that we could—"

"Two heads are better than one, Lieutenant."

"Indeed yes, to be sure. So runs my thought, Captain Black. Twice one is two."

"Just so," Black affirmed. "As you say, lieutenant, we're two men of one mind. And two minds in tune naturally fall into the same rut of thought. A catchword from one is a cue to the other. Two is twice one. By which you mean, of course, that your nigger added to my nigger'll make two niggers; and two niggers tied down in a boat and smothered in ants'll give us a double show and therefore twice as much fun as my one nigger would give us. Am I right, lieutenant?"

"Captain Black—" Ponzo came back over and stood beside him—"you are a most wonderfully shrewd man."

"Who, me? Oh, not at all, Lieutenant. But could it be done? Could we have your nigger to make a double show of it?"

"Done!" Ponzo's eyes shot fire. "Mine is the master's voice here in Pago! My word is the law! Done! It shall be done!"

At this moment the houseboy, with a glass fruit jar under his arm, came around from the rear to the front yard.

"Thief!" Though the lad wasn't a dozen feet away, Ponzo shouted it. "Get another jar—two jars. Fill them both with black ants. But stop! First go over to the barracks and tell the corporal of the guard to bring prisoner Enos Cruz here at once. Go! And hurry, you —— dog, or by the royal head of the Queen Mother of Spain and the Holy Sepulcher I'll have you taken out on the plaza and fanned till— Go!"

He turned and in a much lower tone:

"It will be easily arranged, Captain Black, as you will presently see. When the corporal brings this dog I shall command him to return to his duty and leave the prisoner with me, stating that I wish to question him privately.

"You see, Captain Black, the prisoner must first escape—or, better, be allowed to escape. But in such a manner as will not reflect suspicion upon me. It must not appear that I connived or in any way had a hand in his escape. There must be nothing left behind that smells of preconcerted plan on my part. For indeed the governor would make mine a hot seat, did he learn. The dog must have escaped—from you, Captain Black, from you."

Ponzo paused, twiddling his fat thumbs on his enormous paunch, blinking his eyes at the floor in deep and crafty thought.

"Easy enough, Lieutenant," Black replied. "Just leave him alone with me, and I'll let him get away."

Then leaning back in his chair the big skipper drew two long-barreled pistols from his waistband.

"I'll blaze away at him with both guns, of course, just to make it look good—that is, look good to your men."

"To my men, yes. That is my idea. We think as one, Captain Black. But on the other hand, the native dog must know, or think, rather, that you are assisting him. Thus, Captain Black: After dismissing my corporal of the guard, I shall leave the dog of a prisoner in your charge, here on the porch, while I go upstairs to dress. The moment I am gone you must—as one dropping a mask—pretend a confidential, friendly interest in the prisoner, a concern for his welfare. Whisper to the dog that you desire him to escape out to your ship. Only we must be sure he goes out to your ship, not out into the woods where we should never catch him. Impress upon him that if he remains on the island he will soon be apprehended, and nothing awaits him but the ants and molasses—say to him that I have informed you privily that such was to have been the manner of his death; whereas if he succeeds in swimming out and getting aboard your ship he is a free man."

"I'll do better than that," Black blurted out boldly. "This nigger is married, I drew from him yesterday. Suppose I tell him his wife is out aboard my ship waiting for him."

"Fine, Captain Black, fine! Teresa, Teresa—that is her name!"

"He's bound to make straight for my ship if he thinks she's aboard. I'll shoot him a cock-and-bull tale about her comin' out to the ship late last night, telling me about how he'd got himself in the coop trying to murder you and begging me to help her get him turned loose. I'll give him some more about how I came ashore this morning and shot you a lot of —— lies in order to get your confidence—and if he wants to escape the ants and molasses, now is his chance to scud like —— for the beach and either grab a canoe or swim for it."

"Done, Captain Black, done!"

Black grinned and then added the finishing touch.

"That's something I've wanted to see for a —— of a long time, lieutenant—a man being chewed up alive by black ants!"

"Two men, Captain Black, two," Ponzo corrected, pulling at his mustache impatiently.

SOON Enos Cruz was seen approaching diagonally across the plaza. Two Spanish soldiers with rifles marched one on each side of him, and the corporal of the guard behind. Trailing the corporal came a fast growing mob of chattering natives, dogs, chickens, pigs and goats—the idea being that Enos was being marched out to the garrote to be put to death. But when it was seen that the procession, instead of halting at the center of the plaza where the garrote platform was being built, held straight on toward Ponzo's house on the other side, the noisy mob dispersed.

What troubled Black now was that Enos' hands were manacled. As the prisoner and guards drew near the front gate he turned and said to Ponzo:

"Better have those irons removed, Lieutenant. We've got to give him a chance to swim out to my ship, you know."

Ponzo frowned. Obviously those irons on Enos' wrist gave the Spaniard some perplexity. If he ordered the corporal to remove them it might kick back at him, Ponzo, later, after Enos had made his getaway.

Black saw that this little joker might mean the miscarriage of his plans. But instantly there flashed to him a way of meeting the issue.

"—— bells, Lieutenant!" he burst forth in derision, in Spanish, so that the three soldiers now crossing the front yard would understand, "what manner of men have you in the Spanish army? Can't three of your armed soldiers escort a little Chamorro a few hundred yards unless he's in irons?"

With a flash of his crafty eyes Ponzo conveyed to Black that he grasped the cue.

"Two men of one mind," he reiterated, and then like an infuriated bull turned on the corporal, who now stepped up on the porch and clicked heels before him.

"Jackass! A dog of a Chamorro, and you fear he will escape? Must it be said that one of my soldiers has the heart of a jelly-fish? You are a disgrace to the Queen Mother, to the uniform you wear and to the flag of Spain. You—" and he went on to call the non-com. all the foul and debasing names in the Spanish dictionary.

"But he is fleet of foot, sir," the corporal humbly sought to palliate.

"Fleet of foot!" Ponzo stepped up and dealt him a slap across the face that sounded like the clap of a barrel stave across the broader portions of a fat boy. "Take that!" which was superfluous, inasmuch as the corporal already had it. "Fleet of foot! And with the two best rifle shots in the company, one on either side of him? Can this dog of a native run faster than a bullet? Unlock those irons?"

Fumbling in his pocket a moment the corporal, his face changing rapidly from red to white and white to red, drew forth his keys. Then he stepped over and removed the irons from Enos' wrists.

"Now then," Ponzo commanded, "go you back to your duty! Leave the prisoner here with me. Return when I send for you. Go!"

The two privates were already on their way. The corporal tarried.

"Must I help you with my foot?"

Ponzo advanced a step. But there was something in the enlisted man's eyes that stayed him. With deadly hate and defiance the corporal met his gaze. For a long moment they faced each other. In that moment it smote Ponzo that he had gone too far, had over-reached himself in dealing his subordinate that blow, and also in compelling him to remove the irons from the prisoner. A change came over the fat Spaniard; he grew pale, as the corporal, still glaring defiance at him, saluted and backed away.

With his fat fingers pulling nervously at the ends of his mustache Ponzo watched the corporal stride proudly across the plaza. Finally he turned and, after a shifty sidelong glance at Enos, who stood between himself and Black scowling down at the floor in stoical silence, said:

"I fear it cannot be done, Captain Black! I should become very much involved officially, now! I should not have ordered the irons removed!" His voice rose in pitch and grew thinner; there was panic in it. "Don't you see, Captain Black, if this dog escapes now, and then my pig of a corporal testifies that I commanded him to remove the irons—ah, but don't you see, Captain Black—I should be court-martialed!"

Black pondered a moment. In that moment he winked at Enos.

"Well," he said finally, "then I guess our double show for this afternoon is off. I think we were a little far-fetched in that anyway. No doubt it would look bad for you if this nigger made a getaway, under these circumstances."

"Indeed yes, Captain Black! After I had ordered the irons removed—"

"Yes, and the fact that you handed that soldier of yours a slap in the mush would make things worse. He'd be only too glad to testify against you after that."

"I was too hasty, Captain Black, too hasty."

"Too much wine, Lieutenant, too much wine."

Along the street now came a *carabao*—water-buffalo—drawing a two-wheel cart in which sat an aged native. It came very slowly. A *carabao* has only one speed—very, very slow; he takes one step about every three seconds. But this is plenty fast enough for the native of Guam, whose whole world is bounded by the shores of a strip of land thirty miles long by six miles wide. As he watched the sluggish beast approach, another idea took root in Black's mind.

"Say," he broke off, "I could use that cow and cart after a while. I'll have some provisions to be taken down to the beach."

Ponzo seemed not to hear. His stream of thought was running in another channel.

"Yes, it was the wine, Captain Black," he muttered absently. "I shall have to send this dog back to the calaboose."

When the *carabao* drew abreast of Ponzo's gate Black hailed the native driver. The old Chamorro pulled up his animal, got down off his cart and came tottering across the front yard. He nodded, when Black told him he wanted him to wait, and squatted down in the grass.

"Now let us go inside and talk over this other proposition," Black said to Ponzo, and entered through the front door.

"But there is nothing to talk over, Captain Black!" Ponzo protested, giving Enos a push that sent him in through the door behind Black. "There is but one course: I must summon the corporal of the guard and send this dog back to the calaboose. Move, dog, move!"

He swung a foot at Enos, which the nimble-footed brown lad dodged.

In the middle of Ponzo's big living-room Black halted and turned. Then he acted. Enos stood between him and Ponzo.

With his long left arm Black reached out and swept the native to one side. His huge body lunged forward and his right fist flashed upward. Hurling his whole two hundred pounds of muscle and bone forward and upward, Black threw all he had into that blow. And simultaneous with the thud of his fist against the Spaniard's jaw the Spaniard ceased to know.

BLACK wasted only a very few moments in contemplation of his handiwork. A glance at the prone fat one convinced him that the Spaniard was out of the game for the time being. Ponzo's face was a greenish yellow, his mouth was open, tongue protruding and his eyelids were just barely parted showing two slits of white. Black's next concern was to get him hidden away. The houseboy would return shortly. Or some one else might happen in, no telling.

"Quick now, lad!" Black snapped at Enos; "catch hold!"

They carried the unconscious Spaniard upstairs to the bedroom. First, Black stripped a large blanket off of the bed. He had use for this blanket. Then they laid the Spaniard out on the bed. Black took careful pains in laying him out; he turned Ponzo's face to the wall, crooked one arm up over his head, and laid the other arm carelessly across his paunch. Next he took a quart bottle half full of whisky from the dresser and placed it on a chair near the head-end of the bed within easy reach of the sleeper. Finally, after pulling down the window shades, he stood back and grunted with satisfaction. Ponzo looked exactly like a man who had taken a few drinks too many and was sleeping it off.

"Quick now, lad!" Black picked up the blanket. "Catch hold!"

They spread the blanket out on the floor.

"Sit down," Black directed, pointing at the center of the blanket.

With puzzled wrinkles across his forehead and his black eyes blinking, Enos obeyed, squatted down on the blanket.

"Close together," Black added, pushing the lad's head forward between his knees. Then picking up all four corners he bunched them together, gave a few twists, and then tied his handkerchief around them, thus wrapping Enos up in the blanket. He swung the bundle up on his back and toted it downstairs, out through the front door, across the yard—finally depositing it in the *carabao* cart waiting at the gate.

The old native took his place beside his *carabao's* head and said, "*Allee!*—giddap."

Walking along the narrow, shaded street in the wake of the cart, on which the bundle bumped up and down, Black grinned an all's-well grin. Why shouldn't he? All was well. His purpose was all but accomplished; he had what he had come ashore for, and was on his way back to the beach with it. It would have taken a long stretch of imagination to dope out what was wrapped in that blanket. As things stood there was nothing to arouse suspicion. All he was leaving behind in the way of casualties was a Spaniard's sore jaw; and that wouldn't mature for some time yet.

But a race is never won till it has been run. That *carabao* was in no hurry at all! You've seen these slow-motion movies. That was the way the big animal moved. There was painful method and precision in his every lift of a hoof and in every putting down of a hoof. He just did move. Every third second two hoofs came down and two went up.

Black's grin changed to a frown. For this was nothing to grin at. Time was flying—it was one-third of a mile to where he had beached his boat—and Ponzo might come to any moment. Ponzo's word would bring a whole company of Spaniards on the gallop in a very few minutes. The situation called for speed. Voicing a gruff-toned growl to the old native, Black at the same time dealt the *carabao* a slap across the rump with his big felt hat. To which the big animal responded by coming to a dead stop.

"——'s bells," Black muttered, and began mopping his brow. The old Chamorro only grinned.

They had proceeded only a few hundred yards from Ponzo's house. And now, looking back along the street, Black saw what he didn't want to see. A Spanish army officer had just crossed the plaza and was entering Ponzo's gate.

Now for the fun. Would that officer, upon receiving no response to his knock, go away again, or grow suspicious and enter to investigate. Black didn't wait to find out. Hefting the bundle containing Enos up off of the cart and on to his back he stepped out with long, rapid strides across the plaza, heading for a narrow street that began on the other side and ran straight down to that point on the beach where his boat was.

Half-way across the plaza Black halted, turned and looked back. The officer he had seen enter Ponzo's gate was not to be seen on the porch. Then he must have entered the house. Would he go upstairs? was one question. Would Ponzo recover consciousness? was another. Black spun about and strode on his way across the plaza.

At the head of the street leading down to the beach Black stopped for another look back across the plaza. Again he saw something he didn't want to see. That army officer was now coming out of Ponzo's gate. Hatless, he stood on the sidewalk a few moments looking up and down the street, as if greatly excited. Then abruptly he set out at a run, making obliquely across the plaza toward the guard-house, which was not far up the street from where Black was.

That settled all doubt in Black's mind. The running Spaniard had discovered his deed, had found his messed-up brother officer. He was heading for the guard-house to turn out all hands. In three minutes Black would have a whole pack of Spanish hounds on his heels. And being just about a three-minute run from his boat, Black ran—or rather he jogged along at a labored gallop, for, powerfully muscled and made as the big skipper was, the lad he carried on his back constituted enough dead weight to be considerable of an impediment.

He soon attracted a barking, yelping following. For dogs will be dogs—where a running man with a bundle on his back is concerned. In miraculously increasing number they galloped along behind him, yapping, snapping, howling.

This gave little Enos, smothered in the blanket on the big man's back, decided feelings of uneasiness. Those snarls and yelps and growls were in perilously close proximity—so close at times that he also heard the noise of teeth clicking together. He wished the big man who was giving him this painful ride would stop and swing a foot—before one of those yapping jaws reached up and took a nip. His wish was not granted. One little mongrel leaped up and snapped a mouthful of the blanket. He nipped a small portion of one of Enos' hams along with it, causing the bundled-up lad to add one more yelp to the chorus of yelps and simultaneously to kick out wildly with both feet.

That brought things to a head. With the bundle squirming and bumping up and down on his back Black staggered to a halt, reeled a moment and then fell. But he was on his feet in an instant. It behooved him to be. For rounding the corner up the street he saw Spanish soldiers—three—five—a dozen—and more coming. Some were hatless, some coatless; some carried rifles. At his feet the blanket in which was Enos hopped and rolled about like a hen with its head off. Black pounced upon it, got a hold and, in a second tore loose the handkerchief with which he had bound together the four bunched and twisted corners. Enos rolled out in the sunlight.

"Run, lad!" Black snapped. "Run like ——! Get my boat in the water! Run!"

Away down the street went Enos like a streak of brown.

Drawing both his guns, Black turned and faced the string of galloping soldiers. The nearest man was a hundred feet away; from him the line reached all the way up to the plaza, a quarter of a mile distant. One shot over the head of the leader brought every running Spaniard to a halt and sent natives, dogs, pigs and chickens scurrying for cover. Three seconds after that shot the only moving thing in the street was Enos Cruz. Black stood there, holding both guns leveled up the street, for the moment undisputed master of the situation.

For a few moments his pursuers stood there like men cemented to the ground, each one waiting for some one else to make the next move.

It was Black who made the next move. He turned his back to them, took two quick steps down the street, then spun about and faced them again. At least a dozen rifles were being lifted and leveled at him. Another second and they would have riddled him. But he didn't remain standing there for another second. He took two leaps—one to the sidewalk, another to the shelter of a shack. There, peering round the corner he proceeded to blaze away till one gun was empty.

He cleared the street of Spaniards. They scudded for cover like so many rats.

MINUTES passed. Finally the lieutenant in command, who lay perdue in a back yard between a hen-roost and a pigsty, shouted the order to close in round the shack behind which Black had taken refuge. The command was relayed mouth-to-mouth up the street. In due course it was being carried out. With snake-like stealth the Spaniards crept from shack to shack down both sides of the street.

Some more minutes passed, many of them. Then again the lusty voice of that heroic lieutenant—who still lay between the pigsty and the hennery; hadn't stirred—rang out. He began shouting names, striving, as each soldier answered, to localize the sound of his voice, and thus determine the disposition of his company. He consumed several more minutes doing this. At length, satisfied that the big American sea-dog was completely surrounded, the daring lieutenant once more lifted voice from his snug concealment, commanding his scattered company to "Charge!"

But while all this was taking place Jim Black had been moving. After emptying his gun from behind that shack he had caught opportunity on the wing and moved on to the next shack, then to the next, and so on, holding always in the direction of the beach he scaled back-yard fences, pig-pens. When the Spaniards charged on that shack there was no Jim Black anywhere near that shack.

When the commanding lieutenant received this shouted intelligence he waxed loudly furious. Uttering terrific oaths he got up and strode boldly forth from between the pigsty and hen-coop. Strutting out into the middle of the street he bellowed the command to form company on the double. And he used his right shoe, by way of emphasis, on every man who came within range of his right leg.

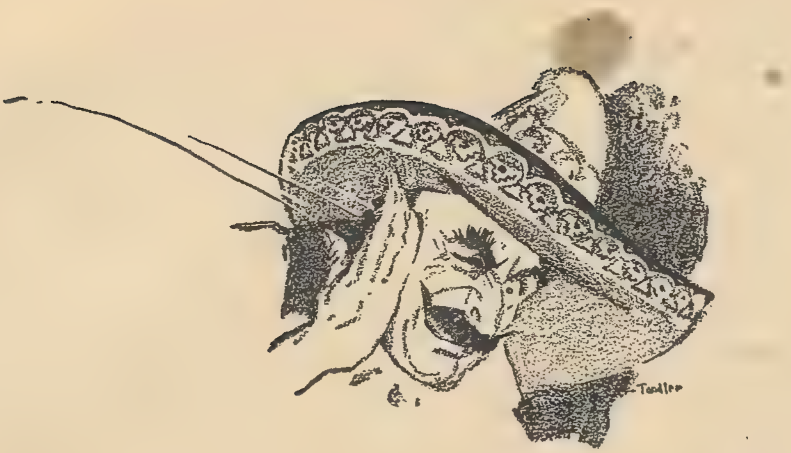
In all probability this resourceful lieutenant's plan was to deploy his company along the beach as skirmishers, and thus cut Black off from his ship.

But alas for that, when he marched his company down to the beach he discovered that the American was several jumps ahead of him. Far out beyond the breakers, about five hundred yards offshore, was a boat with two men in it, a big white man and a little brown one.

The lieutenant sputtered and swore, as he danced around to the rear of his company. But ere he could give the command to aim and fire, something else caught his eye.

A little to the left and seaward of the boat now came the beautiful *Lulu Ray*. Close-hauled on her port tack, her great white sails bellied out round, she was heading straight in for the beach. To the Spaniards it looked as if the purpose of those on board her was to beach her high and dry.

They learned better in a moment. She swooped down upon the small boat, blotting it from view. Then suddenly she pivoted, her long bowsprit swinging round till it pointed dead into the wind. She lost headway, stopped, her spilling sails drumming and flapping. Then in the wink of an eye her great booms went over—and lo, she no longer pointed her nose toward the beach, but her other end. With her sails ballooning before the wind she was San Francisco bound, with a cock-eyed mate at her wheel, twelve Chamorros on her decks and aloft and the thirteenth in the wherry with the captain, towing nicely astern on the end of a line.



The Revenge of Don Emilio

by Thomas Topham

Author of "Frijoles for Breakfast," "Hipolito Buys a Cow," etc.

DON EMILIO DE ORTEZ Y CASTRO was very angry when his right ear was shot off. It was a small ear, for Don Emilio was a small man, but he kicked up as much of a disturbance as if his ear had been the size of an elephant's.

Not that he minded the pain, for Don Emilio paid no heed to pain, whether in his ear or his stomach or his big toe, but the ignominy of having his ear separated from his body while he was peacefully sitting, smoking *cigarros*, in the *patio* at his hacienda, ground his very soul, and Don Emilio had a soul second to none south of the American border.

Fernando, the big fat son of Don Emilio, for Fernando took after the Ortez family and not the Castros, felt that his father showed an anger utterly disproportionate to the extent of his injury. He so expressed himself.

But Don Emilio was not to be argued or pooh-poohed out of the belief that the loss of his ear was an affair of consequence. He held up what was left of his ear for inspection and he howled with the wrath of a descendant of *hidalgos* back to the time of the Cortez.

"It was a noble ear, a beautiful ear," he bawled, "the most beautiful ear in the Castro family. I shall now look like a pig with his ear clipped. Scullion, how dare you smile at my poor, bereaved ear?"

"It was a very small ear," declared Fernando, bending over his father to inspect the injury. "In the name of twenty saints, many, many men have had their ears shot off or cut off. Do you imagine, my dear father, that you are the only man in the world ever to be deprived of a miserable ear? Here, hold your head thus, so that Ysabel can apply the bandage. Ah, that is it. Surely, with a touch like that Ysabel is a ministering angel. Certainly, my dear father, the pain is not so severe that you grimace like a baboon. Pouf, an ear is only an ear, and I assure you there is some of it left."

"Pig, scullion, debased son of a worthy father, do you imagine I grimace from pain?" shouted Don Emilio. "I, a descendant of a line of warriors! *Muchacho*, but for the fact that you are my son I should jerk down that Toledo and plunge it through your heart."

"My dear father! My dear father! Desist," pleaded the unwieldy Fernando with an uneasy glance at the old sword on the wall. "I have heard enough of ears to last me for a long lifetime. Could I jerk off one of my own and clap it on your head I should do it with a suddenness."

"Ha! Ha!" sneered the fiery old *hacendado*. "I do not, of a truth, desire such ears as yours. They flap in the wind like sails of a ship. A very large ship," he added insultingly.

Fernando puffed out his cheeks at this reference to his auricular appendages, but his father gave him no opportunity to talk.

"I am happy the villain left me at least one ear," said Don Emilio, feeling his left member affectionately, "although I shall look somewhat of a lop-sidedness."

This unpleasant reflection started a new train of angry thought in Don Emilio's mind.

"Ah, but I shall have revenge," hissed Don Emilio darkly. "I shall have revenge of a deadliness unknown in all Mexico. I shall hunt down the villain, I shall carve him like a turkey."

"Of a certainty he should be caught first," quoth Fernando. "We have scoured the hacienda; men have gone along the roads, but not a trace of the scoundrel has been found. What were you doing, my dear father, when this deadly bullet so unfortunately bereft you of your noble ear?"

Don Emilio plunged into a recital of his misadventure with gusto. He waved his arms, he shrugged his shoulders, and minded not one whit the pain that this caused him. He described with great preciseness how he had been merely sitting in a chair at the open door of his patio to catch the evening breeze, a *cigarro* in one hand, a glass of *vino* in the other. Suddenly a shot rang out in the darkness, he had felt a sting at the side of his head and had thought the bullet had only grazed him.

The assassin's attack had been so sudden that he had been dazed. Lights had been brought, but it was not until his little grandson Miguel had come running up to him with a piece of his ear in his hand that Don Emilio had realized that actually his beloved right ear had been shot off.

"Think of it, Fernando, my own grandson, your son, presenting to me a piece of my own ear," concluded Don Emilio feelingly. "I thanked him with a graciousness, for the noble little fellow believed that he was conferring a favor upon me."

Fernando, perceiving that his father was deeply grieved, now commented appropriately upon the unfortunate incident, but Don Emilio's anger continued to mount.

"But I shall have revenge," declared Don Emilio. "I shall carry the war to my enemies, for of a certainty it was an enemy who so cowardly attacked me in the dark. I shall ride forth tomorrow to the *rancho* of Señor Alejandro Navarro, I shall accuse him of basely attempting to murder me, I shall call attention to this missing ear of mine and demand satisfaction. It is no other than Señor Navarro. The mystery is why he stopped at one ear. Why not both?"

Don Emilio, with much cursing, called a servant to assist him and stamped off to bed, where he lay long awake, thinking of his humiliation.

It certainly was an unpleasant thing to happen to an aristocrat of the old school, owner of a great hacienda, protector of many relatives. Don Emilio could think of nothing worse. Criminals' ears had been cropped in the old days. Now he, descendant of noble sires, would be compelled to go through the rest of his days with a cropped ear. He lay on his left side in bed and gritted his teeth, and long curses hissed up through the darkness.

Before he finally dropped into a fitful sleep, Don Emilio had solemnly made up his mind that none other than Señor Alejandro Navarro had slipped upon him and fired the shot that had had such disagreeable consequences. He decided that what he would do to that upstart of a *ranchero* would be enough to make him wish that a beneficent Providence had left ears out of its scheme of things.

It was not strange that Don Emilio's mind had so suddenly turned to Señor Alejandro Navarro as the perpetrator of the outrage. Don Emilio hated Señor Navarro with a seething and abiding hatred, although he had never set his aristocratic, glittering eyes upon the man and never intended to, for the youthful *ranchero* had aspired to the hand of Don Emilio's youngest daughter. Surely that was a sufficiency for any self-respecting and rich *hacendado* to class Señor Navarro among the outcasts.

WHEN the young *ranchero* had purchased his small place and carefully fenced it in with American barbed wire to keep out Don Emilio's cattle, the Don had taken an instant dislike to him. This dislike was augmented by the reports that Señor Navarro employed two wild *vaqueros* who had worked on cattle ranches in the United States. Like the disgusting *Americanos* they rode like devils and carried six-times shooting pistols which they liked to brandish. And when, later, Señor Navarro had sent word through Fernando that he humbly desired to pay his respects to the Señorita Carlota the rage of Don Emilio mounted to a dazzling pitch.

"I shall see the *lepero* only to kill him," swore Don Emilio. "I now take an oath that if I set eyes upon the upstart I shall slay him. Can you imagine a member of the Castro family, or even a de Ortez, mated with a dog of a Navarro, whose father never wore shoes?"

"But my dear father," said Fernando, "his family, I hear, was of the best, though impoverished in the revolutions. He is a youth of an excellent presence—"

"Begone from me," roared the haughty old creole, "and convey to the Señor Navarro the word that he lives only if I never see him."

Señor Navarro smiled his flashing smile when Fernando lugubriously carried him the message. Then he grew solemn when he heard that Don Emilio had called him a *lepero*, the lowest in the scale of Mexican life.

"It is not true, *amigo*," he told the purveyor of the unwelcome news, "that my father never wore shoes. He wore handsome shoes until he lost all by the wars." He sighed. "Ah yes, then he was constrained to go without shoes and even to rent trousers when he entered a city. But that time is past. I shall not seek to place myself in the sight of Don Emilio, for then, to save my own life, I should be compelled to kill him, which would not be nice. But you may tell him that I shall not relinquish the hope that the Señorita Carlota shall be mine."

"You could easily steal the Señorita Carlota," suggested Fernando, thereby winning for himself the contempt of Señor Navarro.

"I am not a brigand," returned Señor Navarro. "I steal no maidens. I hope to win the consent of Don Emilio. I have gone to school, I am a man of some education, and I have had instilled into me the principles of which your father is an upholder. Sooner or later I shall convince him that I am a *caballero*."

"So be it," agreed Fernando with a shrug of his fat shoulders, and he had carried a full account of Señor Navarro's stubbornness back to his peppery parent.

So it was, when Don Emilio lost his right ear so mysteriously and so painfully, though he cared not a *centavo* for the pain, it was only natural that his thoughts turned with quickness to Señor Alejandro Navarro.

The next morning after the loss of his ear Don Emilio arose with a headache and in a most disagreeable humor. The nimble-fingered Ysabel dressed his injury as gently as she could, and put on it soothing salve compounded of well known herbs, but Don Emilio bellowed like a bull, not with the pain for never did he care about pain, but at her clumsiness.

"*Muchacho*, you have fingers like the feet of a pig," the old man complained, and then, finding that the bandage covered his sound ear, he roared again.

"What, you would tie up both of my ears," he screamed. "But jerk off the rag and I shall go without a bandage entirely."

They soothed Don Emilio's rage, retied the bandage so that his sound ear could stick out, filled him up with stout *vino* and insisted that he go back to bed. But no bed for Don Emilio, not while his heart seethed with an unsatisfied longing for revenge.

"I shall have revenge," swore Don Emilio. "I shall have a mighty revenge ere the sun sets behind the hills."

Forthwith he ordered his horse saddled, and bade Fernando saddle his own and take along a company of *vaqueros*, for he was going forth to get his revenge.

Before the sun was blazing high in the heavens Don Emilio headed his cavalcade and rode out to seek the life blood of Señor Alejandro Navarro.

He might have succeeded handsomely in his enterprise had not Fernando, suspecting that his father had such an expedition in mind, secretly sent word to Señor Navarro that he had better look out.

Unaware of the cause of Don Emilio's sudden open hostility, Señor Navarro called in his two *vaqueros*, and at the first sight of Don Emilio's party jingling in from the road he locked and barred his house and secreted himself and his two *vaqueros* inside. They were armed with rifles, for Señor Navarro was determined to defend his life, if necessary, by killing. Still, he did not desire the death of Don Emilio, for was not Don Emilio to be his respected father-in-law?

Don Emilio rode into the open space in front of Señor Navarro's house and peered about in hopes of catching his enemy unawares. While he did not know him by sight, he had Fernando at his side to tell him. His secret intention was to cut off Señor Navarro's right ear, nail it on the door of his own house and ride away.

All was still at the *rancho*. Don Emilio rode up to the barred door of the small *patio,* at which Señor Navarro, hidden back of a window, called upon him to halt.

For a moment Don Emilio was undecided what course to pursue. Then he opened his mouth.

"I, Don Emilio de Ortez y Castro," he rolled out the name, "have come to demand satisfaction from you. If you will but come out like a man, I shall merely cut off your right ear, otherwise I shall cut off your ear and slay you also."

Señor Navarro was silent for a moment at this horrible threat. He was puzzled, but he was a man of spirit.

"Why," he asked sibilantly, "does the noble señor desire my right ear? Would not the left do as well?"

The fat Fernando chuckled. Don Emilio turned his wrath on his son.

"Were you true to but one drop of *hidalgo* blood in your veins," he screamed at Fernando, "you would enter that house and drag out the assassin like a rat."

It was then that Señor Navarro spoke coldly from out the window.

"The noble Don Emilio will retire," he announced, "otherwise I and my men shall shoot. I assure you that Pedro, one of my *vaqueros,* is an excellent shot, and at least one of you shall never ride forth again to cut off ears."

At this threat Don Emilio cooled somewhat. He was a brave man, but his surprize having failed, he found himself in the predicament of leading a rather forlorn hope. He called back his brave fellows, retired slowly, thinking, attempting to devise some ruse which would induce Señor Navarro to come out.

The decision of what to do next was taken out of the hands of Don Emilio. One of his young men, impatient at the failure of what had promised to be an exciting expedition, swung his rifle to his shoulder and sent a bullet flying through the window close to the head of the hidden Señor Navarro. Another followed.

As the two bullets came crashing in, the smile of Señor Navarro faded. He had no idea but that Don Emilio had ordered the shooting. Don Emilio seemed, to his mind, intensely in earnest in getting one of his ears.

"Pedro," said Señor Navarro to one of his *vaqueros,* "you are a shooter whose excellency is unsurpassed. I would desire that you merely wound Don Emilio; do not kill him. Teach him a lesson that I am not to be trifled with."

Joyfully Pedro swung his rifle to the window sill, took careful, steadied aim, and shot off Don Emilio's sound left ear.

THE effect of Pedro's shot exceeded all expectations of Señor Alejandro Navarro. Don Emilio threw up his hands in a dramatic gesture, but being a superb horseman he did not fall from his saddle. The whole side of his head felt as if it had been blown off. His followers, including the fat Fernando, fled precipitately, and Don Emilio's horse, being a wise animal, joined the others. By the time his horse had caught up with the retreating band Don Emilio had somewhat recovered.

Fernando, safely out of rifle shot, halted his horse as his father came bouncing up. He looked at Don Emilio in nameless horror.

"Heavens above and —— below," cried the horrified Fernando, "the villains have shot off your good ear."

Don Emilio reeled in his saddle at this news. He had known that he was wounded, but he did not realize the extent of the disaster. To the surprize of his son he failed to rage. Fernando expected an outburst, that the fiery Don Emilio would turn back his horse, perhaps return alone to kill the Señor Navarro or die in the attempt.

Don Emilio reached up a shaking hand and felt of the ear.

"What have I done," he wailed "that this man should take it into his head to shoot off my ears, one after the other? He might have killed me and I should have forgiven him, but this—Fernando, look close; has he, in truth, shot all of it off? Has he not left a piece of it that could be called an ear?"

Fernando made a closer inspection.

"There is some of it left," he said sadly, "but I am afraid the upper half has been carried away with a completeness."

Fernando, now aided by some of his frightened band, bound up the left ear with such bandages as they could devise, and Don Emilio rode heartbrokenly back to his hacienda, looking like an Indian rajah in his turban. He called the maid servant, Ysabel, to dress both his ears, then drank deeply of wine, after which he summoned his daughter, the Señorita Carlota, to his presence.

"Do you look with favor upon this ear-shooting scullion, Señor Alejandro Navarro?" he demanded.

"*Sí*, my father," said the girl timidly. "He is a noble young man, and if he shot off your ears he, of a certainty, must have had an excellent reason."

"Reason! Reason!" roared Don Emilio. "His reason is that he desires to humiliate me in your eyes, to drive you to believe that he is a mighty man. *Muchachita*, he is a coward; he has not the courage to kill me, so he shoots off my ears. Did you become his wife he would at his first anger, and men are certain to get angry with women, cut off your own ears. A pretty sight you would be, *muchachita*, without ears."

Fernando joined his father's protest.

"I agree thoroughly with our father," said Fernando. "I maintained grave doubts at first as to the guilt of Señor Navarro concerning the right ear, but today, when he so rudely deprived our father of his left ear, I became convinced that for some secret reason Señor Navarro had deliberately undertaken to deprive our honored father of all of his noble ears."

Fernando reached up and thoughtfully felt of his own sound ears.

"If Señor Navarro has such a passion for ears," he concluded, "might he not continue his unholy campaign and shoot off my ears, perhaps the ears of the entire de Ortez and Castro families?"

The reasoning appealed as excellent to Don Emilio.

"It is what the villain intends to do," swore Don Emilio. "*Muchachita*, you will forget this man. I swear that he shall not exist long anyway. And in a year I shall take you to the gay Mexico City, where you shall acquire a husband of a nobleness in keeping with your station in life."

The Señorita Carlota stole tearfully away. Don Emilio sat brooding, and muttered curses at the man who, he believed, had deprived him of two ears. At last he spoke:

"It is war, Fernando. I do not desire that the Señor Navarro shall be killed, but we shall drive him out of the country. We shall run off or kill his cattle. We shall burn his house, his barns; set fire to his hay. My son, I shall be revenged by driving him forth, an outcast in the land."

And so it was war. Don Emilio, his head trussed in bandages, led a raid which resulted in the burning of Señor Navarro's house. Señor Navarro retaliated by blowing up with dynamite a corner of Don Emilio's house. Fences were cut, cattle were killed. Señor Navarro, gathering some friends, raided a village on the hacienda and burned some of the miserable hovels.

The war raged merrily, with the advantage much on Don Emilio's side, for he commanded a lordly number of followers who enjoyed such affairs. But right in the middle of it, when Señor Alejandro Navarro had become almost a hunted man, a band of brigands, attracted by the news sifting into the sierras that a disturbance of some importance was going on, swooped down and raided Don Emilio's hacienda.

Unfortunately Don Emilio was not at home, being off on another expedition to avenge his ears; neither were there any men there, except some old and crippled servants. So the bandits carried away the Señorita Carlota and little Miguel. Ysabel, the maid-servant, escaped to a corral where she hid.

Don Emilio, returning, heard Ysabel's story. No, the Señorita Carlota had not been killed. *Sí*, the outlaws had taken everything they could carry. No, it was not Señor Alejandro Navarro, but brigands; they spoke of themselves as brigands, and cursed because Don Emilio himself had not been at home so that they might have tortured him and compelled him to disgorge much of his vast wealth.

"So," said Don Emilio, grinding his teeth in a great rage, "I have enemies all about me. This great fellow, Navarro, is at fault. Had he not shot off my right ear, this might never have happened. I shall yet have a fullness of revenge upon this fellow."

Don Emilio might be earless, but he was not without a great courage. That his daughter and his grandson were in the hands of outlaws was enough for him. Without waiting he gathered such of his men as were able to travel, and set off in pursuit of the bandit band.

So it fell that daylight found Don Emilio and his band well up in the mountains, where the brigands laid an ambush and sent the pursuers, scattered and frightened, back toward the plains from which they had come. Don Emilio, of them all, had maintained his composure in the rout. His own son had gone, riding furiously. His other followers were nowhere to be seen. He himself had, perforce, been compelled to retreat, but he did it with an ill grace. He was raging at his son, at his men. If they had stayed by him, Don Emilio would have swept into the ambush and laid the bandits by the heels, or died as he had lived, a brave man.

And as Don Emilio, defeated, his head bound up where his poor ears were shot off, rode his jaded horse dejectedly back out of the mountains, Señor Alejandro Navarro, with his two *vaqueros*, rode into the mountains, bent on the same mission that had resulted in disaster to Don Emilio.

Señor Navarro had heard the news of the Señorita Carlota's abduction as he lurked in a village, planning some new method of reprisal on Don Emilio. He had wasted no time, but had called his two companions, they had leaped on their horses and started to the rescue. Señor Navarro knew where the bandits hid; all the countryside knew, for that matter, and he put spurs to his horse, cursing in his haste the animal for its slowness of foot.

From afar Señor Navarro beheld the plodding horse of Don Emilio. As he came nearer, Señor Navarro recognized the figure on the horse. Don Emilio was swaying from fatigue, having had no sleep the previous night, and having undergone great exertions.

"Listen to me, *compadres*," said Señor Navarro to his two *vaqueros*, drawing rein as he recognized his enemy, "there comes Don Emilio. He is a vicious and a mean man, one whom I shall probably slay in the fullness of time, but I caution you he is not to be harmed. It is evident that he is hunting his daughter. He does not know me by sight. We shall enlist with him until his daughter is found. For the present I shall be known to you only as the Señor Eduardo Garcia."

"*Sí, sí*," agreed his companions, and they rode to meet the old man.

The parley was brief.

"I have heard, señor, that the Señorita Carlota, daughter of the rich Don Emilio de Ortez y Castro, has been stolen by a band of brigands," said Señor Navarro. "I am Eduardo Garcia. I do not know this Don Emilio, but myself and my friends are riding forth to aid in the search."

DON EMILIO looked at them suspiciously, but he was, nevertheless, willing to grasp any help that was offered.

"I am Don Emilio de Ortez y Castro," he said proudly. "I shall consider that I am under your everlasting obligation, I and my descendants, that my house and all that I possess shall be at your disposal, do you but aid me. My troop of men has basely deserted me, but with three brave fellows like you, I should go back and scale the walls of —— to regain my daughter and my grandson."

"Viva, Don Emilio," cried Señor Navarro. "Bravely said. Let us put spur to our horses. I shall lead you by a path that is little known, and perhaps by a lucky dash we may succeed in surprizing these base villains, regain your daughter and your grandson, slaughter the brigands."

Back went Don Emilio into the mountains, following the lead of his bitter enemy, a man whom he would have gladly slain as the author of all his woes, had he but known his identity. It was a long trail that the energetic señor led the fatigued Don Emilio. Once they stopped at a water hole, where Don Emilio flung himself from his horse to the ground. The sympathetic Señor Navarro placed a blanket under his head, carefully adjusting the pillow so that it did not cause pain to Don Emilio's sore ears, but he asked no questions as to the cause of the old man's bandages and Don Emilio vouchsafed no explanations.

Don Emilio was allowed to sleep three hours, and it was growing dusk in the mountains when his new found friend awakened him, gave him water to drink, a *tortilla* to eat, and then politely invited him to mount his horse.

"You are a kind man, señor," said Don Emilio. "If I live your reward shall be great. I am a rich man."

"*Gracias*," replied Señor Navarro, and relapsed into silence as the horses threaded their way along a rough trail.

The moon came up and bathed the hills in light that threw grotesque shadows among the rocks, across the paths of the horses.

Silently the four horsemen plodded along.

At last they came out on a ledge above a small valley. Encamped below them were the brigands, feeling supremely safe in their rock-ribbed refuge, their fires glowing softly.

Some of them were sprawled asleep. Others sat beside the fires.

"There are about twenty villains in the band," said Señor Navarro. "There are no sentries near them. Perhaps there is one, perhaps two, at the pass beside the stream, the only direction from which they would look for attack. My companion Pedro once was a member of this band, and knows a hidden trail that leads down this cliff, one which they will not be watching."

Señor Navarro had no plan such as attacking and routing the band. His plan was to creep down into the valley, locate the two prisoners, make a sudden sortie, capture them and retreat rapidly back to their horses, left above on the cliff.

The four crept down the hidden trail that Pedro had revealed to his employer. Silently they crawled to a point as near as possible to a brush hovel in which they were certain the Señorita Carlota and Miguel were concealed, then made their dash.

The plan worked well, except that a great monster of a brigand, caught by surprize without his gun, hurled a rock that struck Don Emilio on the head and knocked him unconscious. Señor Navarro handed the señorita over to Pedro, and grasping the unconscious don in his arms, staggered away under a heavy fire.

So sudden and so successful was the attack that the little party was far up the hidden trail before the bandits sensed the cause of the attack and the direction their assailants had taken. Once back upon the ledge that overlooked the valley Señor Navarro breathed easier and undertook to revive Don Emilio. The señorita and Miguel were unharmed.

Señor Navarro shook his head over the victim of the bandit's rock. Don Emilio had a great hole in his head where the jagged rock had struck, and his breathing was feeble.

Holding Don Emilio in his arms before him on a horse, the enemy of Don Emilio rode down out of the mountains as rapidly as he could make it. When he reached the lowlands, Don Emilio was still alive.

"I go to the Señor de Matto," Señor Navarro told the others. "He has an automobile. There is but one chance for Don Emilio and that is to reach San Isidro where they have a physician who perhaps can heal his terrible wound."

So off he rode with his enemy in his arms, borrowed the automobile of Señor de Matto, and when at last they hauled Don Emilio into San Isidro he was still breathing, so tenacious was he of life.

Long Señor Navarro talked that night with the surgeon after Don Emilio had been put to bed in the surgeon's own house. The surgeon shook his head but at last he spoke.

"There is an *Americano* surgeon here, a visitor," he said, "who perhaps would undertake the work, if Don Emilio lives, which I doubt. The Americans are crazy and will try anything."

Señor Navarro went after the American surgeon, and Don Emilio lived. He had a terrible hole in his head where the rock had struck into which the American, assisted by the Mexican surgeon, placed a silver plate where the skull had been splintered. After a number of days during which he was deeply unconscious, Don Emilio opened his eyes to find himself trussed up with bandages and plaster casts and other appliances of which surgeons are fond. After a few days more he was so much better that Señor Navarro was admitted to see him.

"*Amigo mio, amigo mio,*" exclaimed Don Emilio, extending both hands weakly, for he did not yet know that he was speaking to his bitter enemy. "They tell me, Señor Garcia, that you saved my daughter and my beloved little grandson, and even my own life. Never can I repay you, no, not if I devote my remaining years to your service, my fortune to your welfare."

Señor Navarro sat down in a chair beside his enemy. He looked at his head bound up from his chin to the top. Never could one have desired an enemy in a worse condition. Senor Navarro clucked his tongue.

"Speak not of gratitude, Don Emilio," he said huskily. "It is I who shall yet be in your debt, though you do not know it. Six weeks must you remain so, in your bed, and then off come the bandages, and you will be a well man again."

Don Emilio grimaced. A thought had just recurred to him that hurt worse than a thousand rocks tumbled on his head.

"Ah," he said sadly, "and I shall go forth a man without ears. The blessed saints were not good to me, or they would have let me die. I spoke of my gratitude for saving my life. I withdraw the remark. I am grateful for my daughter, for my grandson, but not for my life. Better that I had been left to the mercy of the bandit band."

"Speak not of ears," said Señor Navarro. "Could I give you ears, I would do it," and he left the room with tears in his eyes because of the sadness of Don Emilio over the loss of his ears.

Don Emilio noticed that he limped as he walked out. He asked his nurse the reason, believing that his savior had been wounded in the battle with the bandits.

"A trifle. Merely a trifle," the nurse assured him, and Don Emilio went to sleep.

THE days dragged along. The surgeons came and dressed his head and his ears and went away and Don Emilio slept and gained strength. At last he was able to sit up, then walk a little, and one day Señor Navarro came in and brought the Señorita Carlota and his grandson, Miguel, and his son, Fernando.

"The bandages are to come off today," said Señor Navarro. "We are all here to witness you restored to health."

Don Emilio ground his teeth in silent rage, for he was thinking of his lost ears. A pretty picture he would be with his bald head bearing a large scar where the rock had struck him, and two pieces of ears sticking out from his head like mutilated fenders on a wrecked automobile.

But Don Emilio was a very brave man. He was not going to show the white feather before his great friend, Señor Eduardo Garcia. He would show the brave señor that he, Don Emilio, could wear two pieces of ears with an air as if they were complete ears in every detail. But he privately resolved that if Señor Garcia laughed, or even so much as cracked a smile, friendship would cease.

"I have but one word to say," said Don Emilio grimly as two surgeons came into the room. "You, Señor Garcia, will not be pleased when you see the state of my ears. I shall look like a monkey to you. But I give you my word, the word of Don Emilio de Ortez y Castro that I shall yet have the blood of Alejandro Navarro, who deprived me of my ears. It is an oath I have taken."

Señor Navarro shifted uneasily on his chair and looked at the Señorita Carlota, and at this point the surgeons began unwinding the bandages that had so long hidden the head of Don Emilio. He stood forth, his head naked.

"Oh!" said the Señorita Carlota, and clapped her hands and laughed.

Señor Alejandro Navarro looked and he laughed aloud.

Fernando hit his thigh a great slap and roared.

Little Miguel jumped up and down and screamed.

Don Emilio faced them, a thunderous frown upon his hawk-like face. His rage was terrible to behold.

"So," he bellowed, "am I so ridiculous a sight in the eyes of my friends, my family?"

He reached up a hand to feel of the place where his right ear had been, then with suddenness he reached to his left, then leaped to the mirror of a dresser in the room.

Don Emilio had both ears back again!

The shock was too great for the old man to bear. They had to fill him up with *vino* of a great strength, otherwise he would have died of happiness. He kissed the Señorita Carlota, he kissed the two surgeons, though the American surgeon objected; he kissed the nurse, he kissed Miguel, he kissed Fernando and he kissed Señor Alejandro Navarro, although he did not know at the time that he was kissing his enemy.

When the excitement had died down, and while Don Emilio was admiring his new ears in the mirror, they told him how, when he was unconscious from the terrible blow on his head, the wonderful American surgeon, at the insistence of his great friend, Señor Garcia, had cunningly built him up a new pair of ears out of the shreds that were left of his old ones, with some strands of silver wire for braces, and even a piece of skin taken from the leg of Señor Garcia, which had made Señor Garcia limp slightly for a while. They were smaller ears than the old ones and perhaps not so symmetrical, and they were inclined to wabble, but they pleased Don Emilio immensely.

Don Emilio would have commenced his kissing all over again, except that Señor Navarro stood before him, and with a seriousness that foreshadowed something of importance, he said:

"And now, Don Emilio de Ortez y Castro it is time that I should tell you that I, Señor Eduardo Garcia, am really Señor Alejandro Navarro, and I am still of the opinion that I should much desire to marry your daughter, the Señorita Carlota."

Don Emilio, in his confusion over his new ears and from the *vino* he had drunk, could not understand at first what it was that his great friend was trying to tell him. He thought that the man he knew only as Señor Garcia was asking him for the hand of the Señorita Carlota. He beamed with pleasure and pride.

"My blessings are upon you, Señor Garcia," said Don Emilio, and started to take another drink of *vino*, for his cup of happiness was brimming over.

"I am not Señor Garcia. I am Alejandro Navarro," said Señor Navarro.

It took several moments for this fact to sink into the mind of Don Emilio. Then his face grew black.

"The base villain who deprived me of my ears!" thundered Don Emilio.

"I did not shoot off either of your miserable ears," thundered back Señor Navarro, grown angry at this stiff-necked descendant of *hidalgos*. "But I shall shoot them off with a suddenness if I am sufficiently aroused."

Don Emilio clapped his hands to his ears, for he was frightened.

"You shall not," he hissed, "even if they are a part of you. I have ears and I shall keep them, yes, I shall keep them, even if you have to wed my daughter to pacify you."

Thus Don Emilio compromised with his honor and gave a left-handed consent to the marriage of Señor Alejandro Navarro and the Señorita Carlota. There was great rejoicing that night in San Isidro and Don Emilio hunted up a cousin-brother who lived there and took possession of his house, and announced that the famous Señor Alejandro Navarro was to marry his daughter, the Senorita Carlota. Don Emilio got very drunk while the preliminaries of the wedding were going on, for he insisted that it be performed with all the ceremonies befitting the daughter of a descendant of *hidalgos*, and he boasted that no man was so brave or so self-sacrificing as the Señor Navarro.

After this Don Emilio hunted up the governor who had come for the wedding, for Don Emilio was a man of much importance, and the two held long conference together. The governor came from the conference with a smile on his face and one pocket bulging considerably, and announced in a proclamation that Señor Alejandro Navarro had been appointed a general on his staff.

Don Emilio personally directed the making of the uniform and there was enough gold braid on it to buy all the cattle on his son-in-law's *rancho*.

So they were married, General Alejandro Navarro and the Señorita Carlota, and after a celebration of many days the whole party left for the hacienda of Don Emilio, going in automobiles that Don Emilio purchased. It was very easy for the General Alejandro Navarro, with a bride as fair as the Señora Carlota and a father-in-law as rich as Don Emilio.

There was now only one fly in the soup of Don Emilio. He was still puzzled as to the shooting off of his right ear as he sat in his *patio*. Long ago he had been told how Pedro shot off the left ear, and had forgiven him handomely with a new rifle as a present. Not only was he puzzled, but he was a little afraid that whoever had shot off his old ear would undertake to repeat the performance with one of his new ears as a target. He could not risk such a thing as that, for he was inordinately proud of his new ears and exhibited them upon all occasions.

General Navarro now settled down at the hacienda of Don Emilio, for the don would hardly let him out of his sight and raised such a row when the general planned to rebuild his own burned house that the general gave in. Don Emilio felt that the general would be a wonderful protector of his ears in case the person who had shot off his right ear should be lurking around.

But as time went on Don Emilio grew less apprehensive. He settled it in his mind that General Alejandro Navarro, bitter as he was at his first refusal to let him wed his daughter, had actually fired the shot that resulted in the loss of his ear. The general had never admitted it and Don Emilio had never expressed his suspicions, but it seemed altogether probable that the general was guilty. But so far as Don Emilio was concerned by-gones were now by-gones, and he looked forward to the time when there would be a little Alejandro to play with his other grandson, Miguel.

Feeling secure, Don Emilio resumed his practice of sitting in the *patio* in the evenings with the doors open to admit the breeze. The whole family was gathered there, Fernando and his wife and General Navarro and his wife and several cousins and aunts and uncles. Don Emilio was holding court and talking at a great rate. The stars twinkled and the music came from the *rancho* houses where workers gathered and played on stringed instruments.

And then a shot rang out in the dark, the crash of a bullet could be heard as it struck into the adobe wall back of Don Emilio.

With a howl Don Emilio was on his feet, yelling that his ears had been shot off again, But they were intact. The bullet had missed the new ears of Don Emilio, both of them.

Almost before the noise of the shot ceased echoing General Navarro had leaped to his feet and through the door of the *patio*. He came back in a moment, carrying a large smoking revolver in one hand, and leading by the ear little Miguel, grandson of Don Emilio.

Little Miguel showed the blood of the *hidalgos* as he stood before his grandfather.

"*Sí*," said little Miguel, "I shot off your ear, but I did not mean to do it. I bought this six-times shooting revolver from a *vaquero*, who said it was a very excellent gun and would shoot true, but he lied. It goes off with a suddenness and quite unexpectedly. So it was that when I dragged it from the *patio* drain where I had hidden it, that night long ago, it went off with a bang and shot off one of your ears. Tonight I was getting it out to take it away and hide it in a safer place, when it went off again. But I am glad it did not shoot off your new ears, either one."

"A gun in the hand of a careless boy is as dangerous a weapon as a fan in the hand of a coquette," said General Navarro, slightly twisting a Spanish proverb.

"It is, of a certainty," said Don Emilio grimly, and reaching out a hand he dragged little Miguel to him. Then sitting down in his chair, Don Emilio laid the *muchachito* across his knees and he gave him such a spanking as the son or the grandson, no nor the great-grandson of a *hidalgo* had never before received.

"Ah-h-h," hissed Don Emilio when he had finished, "I am revenged."

HOW GENERAL MONTGOMERY WAS BURIED

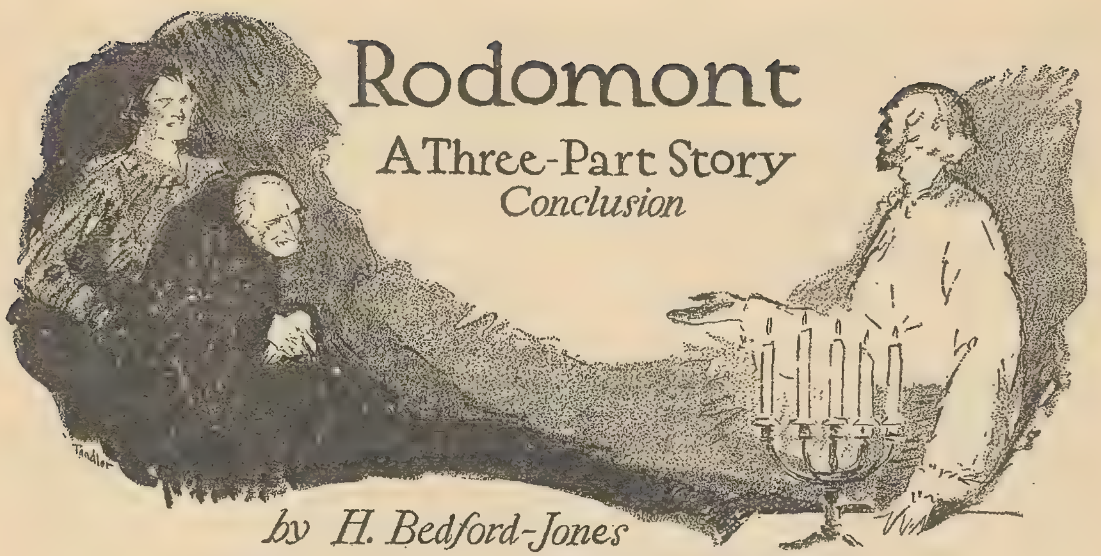
by Faunce Rochester

TUCKED away in one of the early volumes of the "Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society" is what purports to be the truthful account of how General Richard Montgomery died at Quebec, and how he was buried. This ancient testimony is offered "because of the many false reports having been published, both in this country and in England, of General Montgomery's being buried with the honors of war." The writer gives as the source of his information the statements of an eye-witness of Montgomery's attack upon Quebec, his death and burial.

To condense: Montgomery fell a little above Fraser's wharf, under Cape Diamond. The road there would not permit more than six people to walk abreast. At the end of a barricade across this road and in the windows of a low house were two cannon. The cannon were fired at the general as he appeared on rising ground some thirty yards from the barricade. He and his two aides de camp fell and rolled on to the ice in the river. He was picked up next morning.

As the American prisoners denied his death the remains were taken before them. That same night he was buried at the corner of a powder-house near Port Louis. The Lieutenant Governor of Quebec, Mr. Cramche, who had served with the general in the British army, was persuaded by the lady he afterwards married to provide a coffin. This was made "in the roughest manner." The other officers were indiscriminately thrown, with their clothes on, into the same grave with their men. Owing to the season it was impossible to dig suitable graves and, when the snows melted in the spring, some of the corpses were found to be above ground. No stone was placed to point out the general's grave.

The Quebec Lit. & Hist. Soc. 1870-71, p. 63, says the memory of Montgomery suffered for a long time in Quebec from the belief he was the officer of that name who was charged with atrocities during the 1759 siege of Quebec. The general's remains were brought down the Hudson on a barge to Montgomery Place forty-three years after his death. The house was being erected when he was killed. His widow was living there and received the remains.



Rodomont

A Three-Part Story

Conclusion

by H. Bedford-Jones

Author of "South, West and North," "Brown Kurvenal," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form

ROGER DOMONT, nicknamed Rodomont, a released prisoner from France, wanted keenly to get back to America. So did St. Martin, a Canadian, whom he met by chance on the road. They joined in partnership.

Luck soon came to them in the form of an emaciated old Armenian who, exhausted, asked them to take a letter to his master, the Nameless Exile, imprisoned in the royal prison of Mont St. Michel. Upon closing the agreement, he gave them gold and a valuable jewel.

The ways of the road were varied. Baron De Lussan made things uncomfortable for them, with insults and jeers; Elsie de Bebambough, also *en route* to the Mont, came as a shining light of color to Domont; and finally Roger d'Aumont, a wastrel, a good fellow, and a disgrace to his family name, crossed their path.

They met at an inn where d'Aumont was preparing a drinking bout with the host. As soon as the two Rogers met, each was startled by their minute likeness for the other. Domont made it known that his parents came from France, from the original d'Aumont family and that he was the young nobleman's cousin. He explained that his parents had changed the French name to Domont to conform with American customs.

D'Aumont, in turn, confided that he was also on the way to the Mont with a letter to the prior, and that he wished to be disinherited so that he could seek adventure in Canada. A mutual bond was formed, and a wassail ensued. Their good fellowship resulted in Domont offering to take d'Aumont's letter to the prior.

During the drinking a group of cavaliers arrived outside the inn door and, failing to gain admittance, called out——

"Open, rats, open!"

D'Aumont flew into a rage on the insult, but was quelled. The cavaliers entered and made known that their mission was to find the murderer of two cavaliers of the guards.

Not recognizing St. Martin as the culprit, they immediately took leave. No sooner were they out of the inn than d'Aumont's anger returned, and in order to be rid of the cavaliers and a fight, St. Martin knocked d'Aumont to the floor senseless.

In the morning d'Aumont was still in a coma, and the two travelers took up their journey again to the Mont, Domont in the clothes of d'Aumont. St. Martin marveled at the likeness between the cousins, and declared that even their closest friends could not tell them apart.

They had no sooner started than two more adventures befell them. Mistaking Domont for d'Aumont, the Baron De Lussan compelled him to a duel. Domont fought gladly and sorely wounded the baron.

At the next inn they encountered Elsie again. Her female traveling companion, a spy, had tried to rob her of the letter she was carrying to the Nameless Exile on the Mont.

Acting quickly, Domont gained the girl's confidence and was given the letter for safe keeping.

Out on the road again, the travelers met the Mole, a friar at Mont St. Michel. Being a clever, learned old man, the Mole learned the true story of Domont's disguise and purpose, over which he laughed heartily. Together they traveled to the Mont.

Dom Julien Doyte, the Superior, or prior of the royal prison of exile was a kindly old man. He received the supposed d'Aumont like a son.

Tearing open the letter with quavering fingers he read it aloud in part:

". . . we order and command that you receive in your abode Sieur Roger d'Aumont, and keep him there until new orders come from us."

Domont then knew why the Mole had laughed.

FOR Domont, life at the Mont was far removed from the dungeon. He was given the freedom and the hunting wood.

Making a bond of friendship with the Mole was one of his first experiences after arriving. With his help he easily contrived to lower the letters in his trust to the Nameless Exile, and to receive a reply to be delivered in London.

Baron De Karque, another exile, also became friendly with Rodomont and they dined and drank together frequently. It was with the baron that Domont conceived the idea of killing Baron DeLussan in a duel which the baron was forcing. De Karque also proved to be a friend in telling Domont of the treachery of Brother Simon, the real ruler of the Mont, to whom, in comparison, Dom Julien was a mere figure head.

The duel between De Lussan and Domont was of short duration. After Domont wounded the baron and was at the point of giving him a heart thrust, a peasant who held an old grudge against the baron, fired from ambush and badly wounded De Lussan.

On top of this, Domont learned that his cousin and double, d'Aumont, was dead. This would mean life seclusion at the Mont for Domont—with De Lussan free to do as he would with Mary Suffolk, previously known as Elsie De Bebambough.

Simon, spying on Mary and Domont learned the adventurer's real identity, and life became suddenly dangerous for him at the Mont.

Planning that he could play his rôle another week Domont dispatched St. Martin to bring a ship to the Mont on the following Sunday where he, the Mole, Mary and even the Nameless Exile might attempt escape.

CHAPTER X

THE MOLE BURROWS FARTHER

UPON the following morning Domont interviewed the prior. He perceived at once that Dom Julien held him in no suspicion, although he was given another chiding about having struck the wry-necked Karl. His request that his chamber be changed was at once assented to, though the removal would not take place until next morning, this being Sunday.

During the day Domont saw the Mole only at a distance. He noticed, however, that he himself was continually under observation by some of the brethren, confirming his belief that Brother Simon suspected him. This rendered him increasingly uneasy. In the rush of other matters, he had entirely forgotten to turn over the letter of the Nameless Exile to the Mole, and it burned in his pocket.

In the afternoon he sauntered about the abbey precincts, saw a few of his less fortunate fellow exiles taking the air, but had no desire to talk with them. Instead, he turned his steps to the ramparts below. He found Baron de Karque and Mary Suffolk in the garden of the King's Tower, and joined the baron in a glass of wine. He heard about the loss of the snuffbox, which the baron had now discovered. De Lussan, he learned, was in a profound slumber, from which he had not stirred since the previous evening.

Occupied with some embroidery and unable to admit knowledge of French, Mary Suffolk said little, yet when her eyes met those of Domont, the latter read in them a tacit message that made his pulses leap. This girl trusted him. Good! Might she more than trust him? From his first meeting with her, Domont had found in Mary Suffolk a singular attraction, rather, an instant comprehension, an invisible bond of the spirit existing between them. This was all the more strange in that Roger Domont, as a rule, gave no passing look to womankind. His life had been hard, too filled with struggle by bleak New England coasts and Hudson Bay marshes to admit of dreamy romance. In these past few days he had come to let himself dream at times, though he was well aware that it was a vain and futile vision.

Presently the baron was summoned away, the sub-prior having come to consult with him on a matter of administration. Mary Suffolk, looking up from her work again to meet the intent gaze of Domont, smiled suddenly.

"A penny for your thoughts, dreamer! Or are you afraid to speak English?"

"Bah! The secret's out by now. My thoughts were far away from here in Boston town."

"The Boston overseas? Some one is waiting for you there?"

"No one. I was wishing that I were able to take some one there."

"Oh!" Surprize came into her eyes, and a laugh. "Why can't you?"

"Because I'm a poor man. I lost everything when my schooner was captured, and I've been a prisoner these two years. Once back in Boston, I can always get command of a raiding ship for the bay. But why turn back to piracy? That is what it amounts to, particularly in this time of peace. If I could make some money, then I might buy into a trading firm who are friends of mine."

"Hm! I should like to go to America," said the girl softly, reflectively. "Does one need to have money there? I have heard stories about gold being plentiful, and diamonds for the mere picking up!"

Domont chuckled at that.

"Aye, there are tales enough. But why

would you, a girl, like to go to such a land? From caprice, I suppose.”

“Not at all.” She met his smile gravely, seriously, and he was a little astonished by the earnestness of her gaze. “I've spent most of my life about the court, not from choice but from necessity. I'm heartily sick of that artificial existence, my friend. In the colonies, I believe, birth and blood count for little, achievement counts for everything. Is that only another tale.?”

“To a certain extent. Yet it is true in some of the colonies. How could you go without money, though? Have you none?”

“Little enough,” she said. “Could I not go there, earning my own way without being forced to the plantations or sold as a slave-wife?”

“Earn your own way? How?”

Domont's eyes bit at her.

“Why, by teaching music or languages, or by needlework.”

“No, no!” He laughed curtly. “It's a grim land, Mary Suffolk, and these accomplishments would earn you scant payment. If you go, it'll have to be as the wife of some man who can fend and provide for you.”

“In other words, a man who has money. Is money of such prime importance, then?”

Domont nodded uneasily. Somehow, he had the sense that this girl was playing with him, amusing herself with him. The twinkle lurking in her eyes was warning enough of that. Her words were one thing, he fancied, and her thoughts quite another thing. A sudden laugh broke from him.

“I'd like to know what's really in your mind!” he said quizzically.

“And I in yours.”

But she did not laugh as she uttered the words, and her scrutiny was very intent. He shrugged and spoke softly.

“Well, here's one thing at least that's in my mind—to try and take the Nameless Exile with us when we get away, providing we get away. The Mole wants it and I've agreed. It is not primarily a question of gold, though I suppose some one would pay well for his escape if we could manage it.”

“His escape!” The girl caught her breath, and a flash leaped in her eyes. “Oh, if it could be done, if it could be done! They've thought it impossible. Lady Sarah herself told me that twenty thousand pounds would gladly be paid for his freedom, were it possible.”

Domont whistled in amazement.

“Then, by the sword of St. Michael, he goes with us!”

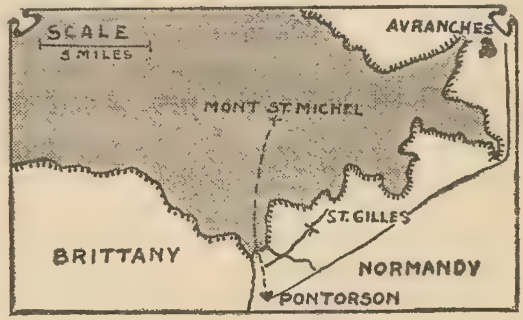
“For money?”

“No. As I say, the Mole loves him.”

“You're a queer man!” She broke into a little trilling laugh, then sobered and leaned forward. “Listen, my friend—” and her face was tender— “I must confess something. I have told you a terrible lie, mainly to see what you would say to it. Never mind just what the lie was! I only want you to know that I did lie to you. If you ever find it out, then you'll understand.”

Domont swept aside her words with a smile.

“My dear girl, you can tell me all the lies you like, and I'll love them for your sake! Now I must be going, and we must not talk in English again. There's been enough risk in what we've said. I don't know what may come up, but be ready at any time for a message from me or the Mole. If St. Martin is fool enough to come back here as he said, then it will precipitate trouble. Our one hope rests on the night of next Sunday.”



She nodded to this. Making his farewells, Domont departed. As for the lie which she had told him, he gave it no more thought.

That same afternoon was held the funeral of the unfortunate madman in the Lesser Exile, who had died early in the morning. For such persons, there was no ceremony in the abbey. Domont, mounting the one crooked street, saw the bier laid down outside the Chatelet by the brethren, where the clergy of the parish church took it up again. In this instance, as the deceased had belonged to a noble family, the sub-prior and two monks assisted at the ceremony in the churchyard below.

No word came from the Mole that evening, nor had Domont any sight of him.

With morning, Brother Simon arrived to make the change of rooms, and pried curiously into the reason therefor. Domont alleged, truly enough, that in time of fog his room swam with moisture, so that he trusted a change to a lower level might be for the better. Simon favored him with a sharp look, but made no comment beyond a shrug. So the change was effected, and Domont found himself installed in the chamber below that of the Nameless Exile. Much to his relief he had no further converse with Brother Simon for, with thought of that letter still in his pocket, Domont was anything but easy in presence of the fat monk.

Later that morning, which was an unusually clear and fine one, Domont was preparing to ascend to the terraces on the very summit of the Marvel, there to enjoy the magnificent view and to smoke a pipe in quiet, when from the window of his chamber he discerned Count de Lussan slowly making his way up the Great Outer Degree toward the Chatelet. He was obviously returning to his own quarters, since the wry-necked valet Karl was following him with a bundle of clothes.

De Lussan was apparently much himself, though he used the baron's ivory-handled stick with heavy hand. Yet Domont was indescribably startled by the man's altered aspect. His step had lost its arrogant confidence and had become hesitant, vacillating; his white features were now all vacant and irresolute, while those handsome, vigorous eyes of his were quite blank. Domont understood perfectly that the drug had temporarily shattered all the man's power of will and energy. Despite his fear and hatred of de Lussan, a hot wave of anger mounted in his heart against the user of so diabolic an agent.

A little before noon, the Mole was in the prior's chamber, having just written and sealed a letter for Dom Julien, when Brother Simon sought admission and humbly craved leave to visit the town below. It was a question of returning to the armorer the irons and tools employed in confining the late madman. The prior readily granted leave, and Brother Simon took his departure.

So did the Mole—who needed no leave—but not by the same road. The little twisted man had a certain curious faculty of remaining unnoted and unseen in dark corners, or of plunging abruptly from sight, yet by no obvious means. Now, as he passed along the Great Inner Degree, the Mole went into the shadow of a buttress and did not emerge. He simply disappeared from sight. Before fat Simon was half-way down the winding street, the Mole made a sudden appearance below the church, hurried on down to the King's Gate and there entered under plea of obtaining certain toilet articles overlooked by de Lussan in departing. He slipped into the tower and was no more seen.

* * *

WHETHER the Mole acted by shrewd guesswork or by some hint of knowledge, his prevision was accurate. Brother Simon fulfilled his errand with the armorer and then sought the King's Gate where he craved audience with Baron de Karque in the tower. He was led to the room where the baron was sealing some letters, and there carefully closed the door upon Karl. He then came forward to the table.

"Monsieur," he said gravely, "it is my duty to lay before you certain information. I beg that you will hold it sacredly confidential."

The baron stared up at him, adjusted his wig and then cursed the ink on his fingers.

"Well, well, what is it? I'll grant your wish. What is this information?"

"It concerns M. de Lussan. Being a humble brother of the order and unversed in worldly affairs, I know not what use to make of it. As it concerns your honor, however, I believe that it should be imparted to you at once."

"Hm!" said the baron, regarding him frowningly. "De Lussan and my honor! —— fly away with me if I like your hints. Go on to the meat of it."

"M. de Lussan," said Simon, "has ordered a coach and escort from Avranches, to be waiting at the barbican gate below, toward midnight of Friday. I regret to inform you, monsieur, that he plans to carry off your worthy niece, the young lady."

"Eh? Eh?" With a rousing oath, the baron sat bolt upright. "Thunder of ——, is this true? That —— wouldn't dare attempt such a thing!"

"None the less, he has made full plans," asserted Brother Simon drily. "His scheme, monsieur, is not entirely known to me. None the less, I learned some details of it.

The means I cannot reveal, as it involves the secrets of Holy Church."

This was a sly stroke, implying that Simon had learned something under cover of the confessional, and was absolutely false. The baron reddened with his rising anger and struck his fist on the table.

"Go on, go on! The details?"

"He plans boldly, monsieur. He will, if discovered in his abduction, make the accusation that your niece is a spy sent here by the English, and that she is not your niece at all but some impostor, whom he is taking away under arrest. He also intends to say that M. d'Aumont is not M. d'Aumont at all, but another spy impersonating that gentleman. This will be his pretense for carrying off the young lady. I do not know, however, what he intends regarding M. d'Aumont."

"Satan fly away with me, what a preposterous outrage!" roared the baron, and vehemence increased upon him rapidly. "Abduction, eh? A member of my own family, and under such absurd pretences? I'll write to His Majesty this moment! I'll have the rascal clapped into the Bastille for this, or into my own chateau of Mont St. Michel."

"Monsieur!" exclaimed Brother Simon hastily. "Remember your promise to me! It would be unwise to cause any breach with M. de Lussan, who at the moment is high in favor with the minister. Besides, he is a very headstrong man, certain to resort to violence. It would be much better to summon a score of cavaliers, have them here on Friday night, and catch M. de Lussan in the act of abduction. Then you may kill him or not, as you choose."

"I never heard of such enormity!" puffed the baron, by this time purple in the face with rage. "Why—why, I know M. d'Aumont very well indeed, and certainly I know my own niece. The impudence of that ——!"

The worthy nobleman trailed off into sulfurous German oaths, amid which Brother Simon carefully intruded renewed suggestions, at which de Karque now caught eagerly.

"Good, good!" he approved. "Hm! I'll summon a score of the *maréchaussée* to arrive here—hm! Thursday afternoon, by boat. I'll set them at work examining the defenses on the other side of the island, and keep them at it Friday. I'll give their officer private instructions. We'll catch this rascal at his work Friday night."

"There may be a question, monsieur," said Black Simon thoughtfully, "as to whether your authority over these cavaliers exceeds that of the king's deputy."

"Oh, may there?" The baron glared at him, and showed his teeth in a mirthless grin. "I happen to know the privileges of my position. Under His Majesty in person, only one man alive has authority in this place, and that is the Abbot of Mont St. Michel. If I choose to turn M. de Lussan from the gates and bid him be gone, or Monsieur the King's royal brother or M. de Pontchartrain, that's my right, by the thunder of heaven! My orders are supreme here, under His Majesty, and they'll remain so!"

"Quite so, monsieur," said Brother Simon humbly. "But may I suggest that you write M. de Pontchartrain immediately, stating what you have discovered, and also that you are taking steps, which you need not detail, to prevent the outrage? I would not mention this nonsense about your niece being a spy. Merely that you have learned of M. de Lussan's intent."

"An excellent idea. And if I don't put six inches of steel into that rogue Friday night, wounded or not, may I never see Cologne again! Good Brother Simon, I thank you with all my heart for this timely warning, and I shall keep its source to myself."

Brother Simon departed, smiling softly to himself. A little afterward, the Mole slipped quietly from the King's Gate and departed likewise. Now, had not the Mole been in a hurry, the entire course of his life—and perhaps the course of history as well—might have been somewhat altered. He was, however, in a hurry, and Brother Simon was not in a hurry. So it happened that, as he toiled up past the parish church and its open air crucifix, the Mole came plump upon Brother Simon, seated on the bench to one side and resting in the shade. Brother Simon's eyes opened wide in amazement.

"Ha, little brother! I thought that you were with Don Julien!"

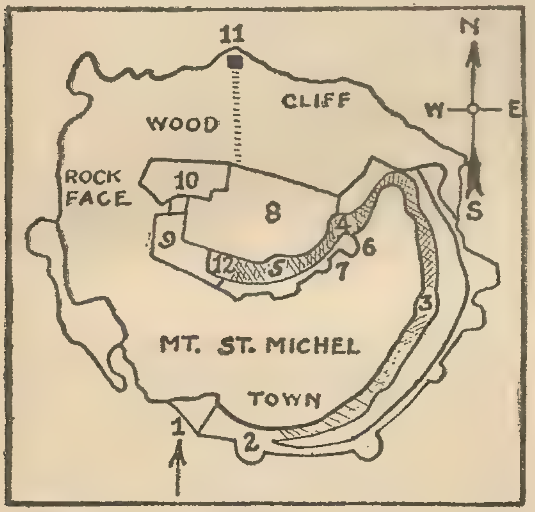
"So I was, but I went an errand," said the Mole, taken somewhat aback. Brother Simon frowned and squinted at him.

"Oh ho! And what was this errand, eh?"

"Why," flung back the Mole with a grin, as he hurried on, "perhaps to follow you!"

Now this was the greatest folly that had ever left his lips, although he chuckled at it and Brother Simon laughed in hearty merriment at the jest. With this utterance, the Mole sealed his own fate, since the possibility of truth in those words raised in the heart of the fat brother a perfect whirlwind of fear, consternation and anger.

That afternoon Domont was approached by a pale, health-broken marquis who inhabited the Lesser Exile and was hungry for companionship and news. Taking pity on the wretched man, who had been immured in this place during the past seven years for some momentary folly, Domont accompanied him to the Teste d'Or, where they enjoyed some excellent wine and a fat lobster fresh from the bay. Most of the afternoon being thus spent, Domont saw nothing of Mary Suffolk for this time.



1. BARBICAN AND SOUTH GATE. 2. KING'S GATE AND TOWER. 3. STREET LEADING TO ABBEY. 4. CHATELET. 5. GREAT INNER DEGREE. 6. PERRINE TOWER. 7. ABBATIAL BUILDINGS. 8. CHURCH. 9. WEST PLATFORM. 10. GARDEN. 11. FOUNT OF ST. AUBERT. 12. SOUTH PLATFORM.

After vespers were over and his prison door had been locked for the night, Domont sat waiting impatiently, smoking the last of his tobacco and watching the shadows of night close down across the sands and shores below, until at length Normandy had faded into a purple haze and the stars twinkled clear. Then, without warning, he heard a sudden thump in the wall beside him, then another, followed by a sudden scrape as his commode was shoved into the room. He sprang up and lifted it away. With a dolorous squeal, a stone of the side wall swung inward, and he heard the voice of the Mole in a panting ejaculation.

"By the bone of the blessed St. Benoit, this thing had not been moved for a century and was rusted fast! I must bring oil for it tomorrow. Are you here, Rodomont?"

"Aye. A secret passage in the wall, eh?"

"One? A dozen of them, though some have been blocked or walled up. We're safe enough but must keep our voices down, for there are guards outside the Chatelet, on the stairs."

"What news have you, any?" inquired Domont.

The Mole crawled through the hole into the room, and fell into silent laughter.

"Why, I've discovered the fiend's own business, my friend. This fat brother of ours is playing a secret game of his own!" The Mole came erect. "Now I know why all these letters have been sent off, and why he gave de Lussan that green drug. I was listening at the keyhole of the baron's door this noon, and could have doubled up with laughter then and there. Fancy sleek Simon laying a trap for that aristocrat de Lussan! Well, lust has ruined many a better man, and it will put this one into the Bastille unless it puts him in hell first. That German baron has sworn to run him through, and by his voice he meant the oath. That's what fat Simon is after, of course."

Domont was puzzled.

"I don't see why."

"Ambition, no doubt. Our Simon would like well to rise higher in the world, and is well on the way to accomplishing it. With de Lussan dead or disgraced, as will assuredly happen, who then will quietly pull all the net-strings together and catch these English spies? Why, fat Simon! You and the demoiselle will be nabbed. St. Martin will be laid by the heels; the royal delegate at Caen, who alone has any authority to investigate things here, will burn me as a wizard, and Brother Simon will get a priory out of it at the very least, or perhaps an abbey! He can pull the strings, never fear."

"Explain, man, explain!" begged Domont desperately. "Remember, I don't know what's in the air or what has happened!"

"*IMPRIMIS*," and the Mole chuckled, "de Lussan knows that the demoiselle is a spy, and so he means to carry her off to Paris, indulging his lust on the way. He has planned this for Friday night."

Domont started.

"Friday! Then our last hope's gone."

"Wait, my friend, wait! The Brother Simon proposes, but the count disposes. Sly one, to shift all the onus of action from his own shoulders!"

Vastly delighted, the Mole went on to relate the conversation he had overheard between Brother Simon and Baron de Karque, for he had missed very little of it.

"The good German," he concluded, "will now assuredly bide his time, catch de Lussan in the very act of abduction, and then kill him like a dog. Being the abbot of this place, which position carries some amazing privileges, he need not fear the king's deputy in the least. Brother Simon gets letters off to Paris, in order to insure that he will get all the credit in proper quarters. Then, de Lussan dead, he will tell the prior what it's all about. Dom Julien will put you into the cage or the Trappe, being himself responsible for all prisoners and exiles, as the abbot's mitre after all is a thing honorable rather than potent. He will then make certain of the demoiselle, and await orders. I'll be on my way to the rack. A new royal deputy will come post-haste, or else Brother Simon will receive the appointment. And then how the old Mont will boil like a kettle!"

Domont stared at the darkness in blank dismay.

"But that knocks all our plans in the head! Whatever happens, by next Sunday we'll be separated, and perhaps in cells down below!"

"Exactly." A fluttering sigh came from the Mole. "As Brother Gabriel always says, '*Absit omen!*' Which is to say, being translated, what the —— are we to do?"

Domont was silent for a space, consternation weighing heavily upon him.

"Escape, then. If we can reach St. Malo—"

"We can not. Our friend in the room above speaks no French, and there is the girl to consider. Suppose we got away on Thursday night? We could leave the Mont easily enough, and reach shore. We should be caught before the sun was an hour high above the Norman hills! Even if we secured horses, we could never hope to get ten leagues on our way."

"What about escape by sea? Could we obtain a fishing boat?"

"Readily. But suppose we did so? The boat would be missed, for a check is kept upon them. By dawn the pursuit would be out. Every port along the coast would send out craft to run us down, and the other boats here would be after us. Besides, don't forget that the baron will have a score at least of the *maréchaussée* here on Thursday! If a miracle happened and we reached St. Malo, would we find that Dutch lugger ready to sail? Not before Sunday night. No, friend Rodomont, we must rest patient, bide our time, see what happens. Perhaps a way will open out before us."

Domont grunted ironically. He could see nothing but disaster ahead. No matter what might happen on Friday night, the result to him would be the same—a dungeon. Suddenly he started in the darkness.

"Listen! It appears that de Lussan has said nothing about me or the demoiselle? He is keeping his discoveries to himself?"

"Yes. He trusts only Brother Simon, to his future sorrow!"

"Then he'll be attended to on Friday night, and his secrets go with him. Now, if we could dispose of Brother Simon somewhat before then, say on Thursday night—"

The Mole caught his breath sharply, and there was a moment of silence. Then, in the darkness, a large hand clamped upon the arm of Domont.

"Good, oh, good! I knew that somehow we'd discover a way. Yes, that could be done! Yet, can you cope with Simon? No wasted fat there. He's a very bullock in strength, I can tell you! If we could catch him unawares—and I might arrange that matter somehow—then could you down him? It's not a matter for killing, I hope."

"That's all one to me," and Domont laughed.

"I have a better notion. We could leave him tied in one of the cells that are ruined and unused. There are enough of them, St. Michel knows! We have only a dozen brethren here where there used to be sixty in the old days. Aye, excellent, excellent, my Rodomont! De Lussan will certainly be killed by the baron or his men. And with fat Simon out of the way, we have a breathing space and room to act. A pretty game, my friend, if only you can handle the fat brother!"

Domont smiled grimly in the darkness.

"Trust me! But we shall need weapons, and where shall we get any?"

"Weapons enough in the armory, but I

can not get at them. The captain of the guard always has the keys about him."

"There are plenty of votive swords and dirks about the chapel altars," said Domont. "We could get them, I suppose?"

The Mole was silent a moment, then answered in a troubled voice.

"In case of urgent need, I suppose so. The sword of du Guesclin is there, and others. However, they would be missed, of a certainty. And besides—besides—"

His voice came to an uncertain pause. Domont prompted him.

"Yes?"

"Well, my friend, it is like the prospect of killing Brother Simon. Something warns me most frantically against it. To take those votive weapons would be a sacrilege, though in case of extremity I would take them. But to shed the blood of a brother here in the very abbey, would be to invoke the sure punishment of God. There are some things, Rodomont, of which the Mole is afraid. Call him a fool if you will."

"I don't," said Domont quietly. "Perhaps we'll have no need of weapons. How to get Brother Simon where we want him?"

The Mole chuckled eagerly at this.

"His report of certain accounts is overdue, and he has been too busy to make it out. I shall speak to the prior about it Thursday afternoon. Brother Simon will be told to hand in his report on Friday morning. That means he'll have to work late Thursday night, which means that he'll have to work in the scriptorium with a candle. This, all of it, means that we shall catch him easily, and we shall then be secure until Sunday night at least. Good! Now let us go. I have a couple of bottles of good wine on the stairs, and we'll visit the man overhead."

"This is a curious sort of prison," and Domont laughed. "It's folly to regard any further danger, so tell me who this Nameless Exile is, if you please!"

"I don't know who he is, Rodomont."

"But you know his name."

"His name is Avedis Vertabed. Who is he, why he is here, I don't know. If you could speak Greek, then you could talk with him."

"Not I. Well, lead on! If he wishes to escape with us, signs will do the work."

The Mole took Domont's hand and led him to the hole in the wall.

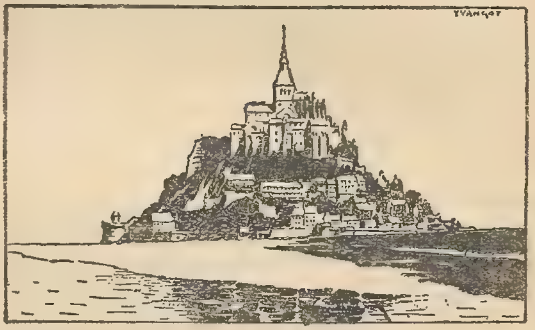
CHAPTER XI

AMBITION ENDS IN THE AIR

INSIDE of five minutes, Domont found himself in the room of the Nameless Exile.

It was a singular scene which revealed itself in the candlelight—the awry figure of the Mole, casting a grotesque shadow against the ceiling, the tall and severely noble prisoner, who by his looks might well have been the ruler of some orient land, and lastly the red-haired, vigorous Domont from the other extremes of earth.

Those dark and serene eyes searched Domont for a long moment, and then the prisoner held out his hand in dignified benediction to his two visitors. After this, the Mole opened a bottle of wine and the three men disposed themselves comfortably. Domont attempted to talk with the Nameless Exile, in every tongue that he knew, but he had no better luck than the Mole, whose monastic Latin was quite beyond the mysterious prisoner's comprehension.



However, when it came to the subject of projected escape, that was a very different thing. The word "London" reached its mark, and the signs which the Mole made. Now those proud eyes flashed, and a swift animation leaped into the features of Avedis Vertabed. He assented with a fiery eagerness, pouring forth a torrent of words in his unknown tongue until the Mole warned him to silence; and when Domont with one finger drew the outline of a ship, he nodded complete comprehension.

The name of Ketchedourian followed, and at this, closing his eyes, the Nameless Exile silently blessed the absent Armenian. Here, reflected Domont, was a churchman, and at the very least a bishop. Perhaps even some higher potentate of the church. Not at all incredible in a day when such dignitaries were active politicians, and the Bastile held more than one of them.

Now ensued more signs, to make clear the fact that the escape would take place on Sunday night. This was finally accomplished, after which the Mole opened out his chess board, set forth the men, and Domont, who knew nothing of the game, watched the silent match as it progressed. It was late when he at length followed the Mole from the shrouded chamber and groped his way back to his own room along the narrow staircase that pierced the ancient walls. When he had scrambled through into his dark abode, however, the Mole refused to follow.

"No. But come with me tomorrow night, Rodomont," said the twisted creature. "We shall be gutter cats in truth, and I'll show you how we are to get away. Did you arrange with St. Martin for any signal when the boat comes?"

"A light shown from that tower where the windmill stands, on the seaward side."

"Ah, the Tower Gabriel! Well, that's impossible. But if we show the light from the Fount of St. Aubert, it'll be all the same. Good enough! And now, my friend, guard your speech and actions with care, so that no crisis may come upon us. It comes to my mind that I said a very foolish thing to Brother Simon today, and when I think of the way his little pig's eyes looked at me, I am moved to regret it. However, we must do what we can. And so, good night to you, my friend!"

With this, the Mole took his departure.

Domont remained sorely puzzled by what he had seen. The name of Avedis Vertabed was a singular one, might even be some title rather than a name. Who or what was this unknown prisoner? The man's extraordinary appearance and personality were impressive evidence of his high estate, and it was obvious that such extensive precautions would never have been taken against any petty intriguer or any ecclesiastic who had offended the rules of his order. No, this was a man whose destiny involved the fate of kingdoms. But what kingdoms? For the present there was no solution to the puzzle. So ended Monday.

Tuesday brought a sharp and severe thunderstorm, which deluged the Mont with rain at intervals during the day, but cleared away toward evening. De Lussan showed up for the evening meal in the refectory, after having slept most of the day and preceding night as well, after reaching the Marvel. The sleep had not refreshed him, for though he walked with some steadiness, his face was that of a drunken man and worse, being filled with that look of awful and vacant irresolution which Domont had previously noted in it. Despite everything, Domont could not help feeling sharp pity for the man. Destruction of the body was one thing, but this infernal undermining of the soul and spirit was another.

Late in the afternoon Domont went to the lower town, found that the baron and his niece had gone for a walk around the island, it being low tide and clearing weather, and so went back again without having a glimpse of Mary Suffolk. Night came, with the storm gone but shreds of cloud sweeping across the sky to hide moon and stars, and with night came the Mole to scratch upon the stone.

Domont had by this time resolved to keep that all-important letter himself. Between the schemes of de Lussan and those of Brother Simon, it now seemed that the threatening peril might be prolonged to his own advantage. So that he had hidden the packet securely in the lining of his breeches, where any but the most careful search would pass it over.

"Our friend," and the Mole pointed to the room overhead, "is ill tonight, so there's no visiting him. He has a touch of fever at times, which affects him badly, but will be all right in a day or two, barring weakness. And now, my friend, I have an idea! I shall go to de Lussan tomorrow evening, and reveal to him what Brother Simon did about the drug—oh, I'll be cunning enough, never fear! De Lussan is already as good as destroyed. So, if he destroys Brother Simon in his fury, as well he may—you comprehend? There's the prettiest game of all, Rodomont!"

"Good enough!" Domont's laugh chimed with the delighted chuckle of the Mole. "But is it safe for you, my friend?"

"Safe enough. Indeed, how can I be any worse off than I am? I met fat Simon today and he gave me a terrible look. I could read strange things in his eyes. I am afraid of him, bitterly afraid! Well, I am not afraid when it comes to putting my brain against him, and we shall see. That poor M. de Lussan is in horrible shape, like a man who has lost half his brain. He sits in dream, tries to write letters that he can not finish, and when he discovers the reason for his condition, I verily believe that he will kill Brother Simon like a rat!"

"Let us hope so," said Domont. "Your scheme is a good one, if you can manage it. But I am afraid for you."

"So am not I," declared the other confidently. "Well, are you ready for our little excursion? It's an excellent night for us, all the brethren are snoring, the pilgrims are housed and the rampart guards are as usual warming themselves in sheltered corners and cursing Dom Julien."

"I heard two of them talking today," observed Domont, "and they seemed anything but complimentary. Why is that?"

"They are fishermen from the villages along the coasts, fiefs of the abbey. They're bound to give watch and ward service, and they hate it most bitterly. Last winter two of them deliberately turned their backs so that an exile could escape! He was sucked down in the quicksand, true, but that was immaterial. Well, get along with you, and wait for me at the bottom of the stairs."

Domont crawled through the hole in the wall, reached the narrow staircase and descended this for an interminable distance until he came at last to a damp level. Here the Mole joined him and, taking him by the hand, led him along until presently they came to an ascending flight.

"This brings us out in St. Stephen's chapel, by the way we go tonight," explained the Mole. "From there we can go openly to the covered walk, take another burrow in the wall of the Charter House and come out in the garden below. That's only one way of doing it. There are half a dozen others. What's secret to the Mole? Nothing! If these brethren would only study the old manuscripts and plans as diligently as they whine psalms and write histories, they'd discover a lot about our sacred Mont!"

After some little time, the two men crept from another tiny opening into fresh air and darkness. Domont, unable to see a thing in the dense obscurity, accompanied his guide in blind silence through echoing passages. Now another squeaking stone moved back, they descended another desperately narrow and slimy staircase and came to still another emergence, this time finding themselves in the garden of the abbey, with the high black walls towering behind and to the right. To their left was the steep rock scarp, a precipice which ended in the black sea below. Directly ahead, falling sharply away from the perpendicular masses of walls, dense trees covered an abrupt slope to the rocky north shore. These trees composed the abbey wood where rabbits and birds were warrened and fattened for table use.

"Come," murmured the Mole, starting away. "Keep close to the wall and mind your step."

DOMONT followed him narrowly. Where the garden adjoined the massive walls, they came upon a long and narrow staircase of stone which reached down through the wood toward the shore below, in this spot free of cliffs. Once on this staircase, which was fortified but unguarded and half in ruins, the two men rapidly descended until they discerned a small, square building which lay at the very edge of the water.

"Tide's not in yet," said the Mole, flinging himself down to rest. "Now we can talk in peace. You perceive my system of escape, Rodomont?"

"Aye," and Domont laughed in delight. "You must have confoundedly strong legs, to wander around this sacred hill of yours as you do!"

"Freedom gives strength, friend of mine. By day I am a poor slave, but by night I am myself, and how I laugh at those rogues up yonder! Night sees the little Mole come into his own, and only the moon and the clouds know how many secrets he has won from this ancient pile of Chausey granite! Well, this is the Fount of St. Aubert, where water may be had if the cisterns fail. And it is here that I plan we shall meet the Dutch lugger—that is, if we meet her."

"I've been thinking over the matter, since seeing this staircase and landing," said Domont, and pointed to the sandy strip beyond. "What's to hinder our fetching around one of the fishing boats, after dark? If those guards hate the place and their duty, as you say, a bribe might effect much."

"The thing is easy enough. Only, when daylight shows a missing boat and points our way, pursuit would certainly overtake us," answered the Mole. "Nothing would be easier than to get the boat, so far as that goes. For a couple of gold pieces I could bribe any of these covetous Normans to close their eyes."

Domont understood the futility of such an escape, unless they could meet the lugger, for in order to gain the open sea from the head of the deep bay in which lay Mont St. Michel, they would have to pass St. Malo and a dozen more ports, and a small boat would certainly be cut off and run down. Accordingly, he said no more on the subject.

For an hour he remained here, talking with the Mole, and it was settled that on the following evening the little scrivener should acquaint de Lussan with Brother Simon's treachery. Then they retraced their steps to the garden above and, after much weary climbing, Domont found himself safe home once more, heartily glad to fling himself on his bed and seek slumber.

On the next afternoon, Wednesday, Domont encountered Mary Suffolk on the ramparts, and together they spent an hour in wandering high and low about the Mont, only certain portions of the Marvel being cloistered from the eye of women. In the course of this ramble, Mary Suffolk not only gained a clear idea of how their escape would be effected, but she became acquainted with the change in their plans and assented readily, for in case of any emergency Domont was determined to take a fishing boat and run his chance of getting away.

Since the unfortunate discovery that she talked in her sleep, the girl had barred the maid from her room at night. She was confident that she could leave at any time without observation, as the window opening was unbarred and was just above the rampart. She apprised Domont of its location, in the event of necessity.

"No guards are stationed near there," she went on, "so if you have to come unexpectedly, throw a stone at the window and I'll hear it. If nothing happens before then, I'll be ready Sunday night. I'll be ready each night, in fact."

Domont perceived that de Karque had told her nothing of de Lussan's plan to carry her off, and he himself was careful to keep silence about it. Beneath her exterior of quiet poise, he divined that she was nervous and sharply on edge.

Vespers was little more than ended that night, and darkness had not yet crept in from the sea, when the stone in Domont's wall slid on its hinges, now well oiled, and the Mole beckoned from the opening.

"Now's the time!" he exclaimed softly. "De Lussan has been abed all day. He's gone now to the abbey hostelry to settle some dispute among those pilgrims, for none of the brethren speaks German and he knows the tongue well. Come along! The letter is written. It is not signed. We'll go direct to his room and leave it, then watch what happens."

The little man was excited and at high tension. Domont followed him into the secret passage, and presently found himself climbing a twisted and narrow staircase. Now the Mole, knowing his way perfectly in the darkness, touched Domont and uttered a word of caution. He leaned his weight on a stone, which slid away to reveal the obscure and unlighted chamber of de Lussan.

"Good! He's not back yet. We're in the fireplace. This tapestry hides us, but you can see through the tatters. Wait for me."

So speaking, the Mole scrambled through the hole, lifted the tapestry, and darted out into the room, where he tossed a folded paper on the table. Almost at the same instant, steps sounded at the outer door. By dint of agility, the Mole regained his hiding-place just as de Lussan strode into the room, holding a lantern.

With a curse at the chill darkness, the king's deputy lighted his candles from the lantern wick. He had left the door ajar, as if expecting some one to follow, and the Mole drew Domont's attention to this with a nudge of his elbow. No sooner were the candles alight than de Lussan, who still looked somewhat shaky, observed the letter on his table. He picked it up and held it to the candles, reading. His face changed, swept into passionate storm.

"Ten thousand ——!" he exclaimed. "Where did this come from? And no name signed! No matter, no matter. This explains everything. Drugged, eh? You cursed, fat rascal, I'll let the life out of you for this work!"

Impetuously, he dropped the letter to the floor, ran to the corner, and caught up his sword. His aspect was wild in the extreme. A low torrent of oaths rushed from his lips. Suddenly he flung down the weapon with a clang and caught at the wall for support, one hand over his eyes. A groan broke from him, but not from the pain of his wounded side.

"Drugged, drugged—and my wine tasted bitter tonight! My head's bursting. I've no will, no ability to do anything. And yet Friday night draws on! Oh, treachery, deviltry—"

A low knock at the door, and Brother Simon stepped into the room.

De Lussan came erect, drew his disordered and unpowdered hair out of his eyes, and somewhat calmed himself. He went forward, stooped and picked up his sword, and laid the blade across the board. Then he seated himself. Only the deadly pallor of his face, against which that scar stood out like a new dark wound, and the blazing fury of his eyes betrayed any inward emotion.

"Shut the door and come here, Simon," he said in a low voice.

The fat brother obeyed, shuffled forward with his silent tread and paused before the noble. De Lussan stared at him.

"Why did you steal that vial which contained the green oriental drug and have it put into my wine?"

Brother Simon started slightly. His little eyes widened, his mouth hung open. Then de Lussan's clenched fist crashed down on the table.

"Answer, you dog! So you thought to destroy my work and me together, did you? And there was something in my wine tonight. By St. Michel, I'll give you quittance for this!"

Leaping to his feet, he seized the sword and drove forward as though to spit the fat monk where he stood. Brother Simon did not flinch, however. Instead, he lifted one hand, and the gesture stayed de Lussan.

"It is quite true, monsieur," he answered quietly. "Will you let me explain?"

"True?" cried de Lussan. "You dare to confess that you drugged me, poisoned me?"

"So the surgeon ordered, monsieur, though it is not a matter of poison. This drug leaves no bad effects after a day or two. It has the virtue of giving absolute repose and deep slumber. The surgeon knew that we used it here on prisoners, and he advised me to give you a large dose."

The Mole drew back a little beside Domont.

"We're lost," he breathed and his voice was inexpressibly mournful. "Simon's too much for him, and he's had more of the drug tonight."

Lost, indeed! De Lussan's whirlwind of fury was dissipated and broken by the absolute calmness of Brother Simon, and by this ready confession and explanation. For a moment he glared at the monk with wild eyes, then the storm-light died out of them, to be replaced by a confused irresolution, and his sword fell and clattered on the table. He frowned, trying to collect himself, but ended by sinking back into his chair.

"You are right, you are right," he muttered, and covered his face with his hands. "I might have known! My wits are all at loose ends."

"You directed me to come for orders, monsieur," said the monk steadily.

De Lussan drew a deep breath and looked up vacantly.

"I have forgotten," he said, and his voice was tremulous, shaken. "It was about—about the letter from Avranches."

Hastily and feverishly he began to paw over a litter of documents upon the table. Brother Simon quietly stooped down and picked up the paper that lay almost at his feet. He perceived that de Lussan was paying no heed to him, and glanced down at the writing. His jaw fell for an instant. Then he swiftly crumpled the paper in his fat fist.

The Mole drew at Domont's sleeve.

"Away! Now he knows all, my writing—"

The murmured words were instinct with fear. Domont heard de Lussan say something about the coach and escort that would arrive Friday night. Then the stone quietly slid into place and the hand of the Mole was jerking at his sleeve in frantic terror.

"Lost, lost! We have failed! What shall we do, quickly! Now he knows that I wrote the letter. Did you see his face? He will go to the prior. It means the wooden cage for me at once, until they send me to Caen."

Domont took the man's hand in his.

"Quietly now, my friend!" he said, and his voice was deep and steady. "We'll have to make sure of him at once, instead of tomorrow night. Do you know which way he'll go from here when he leaves?"

"Up the Inner Degree, of course, and through to the dormitory."

"He'll cross that south platform at the top of the Inner Degree?"

"Yes."

"Then lead on and we'll catch him there."

In the darkness Domont patted the shaking hand of the Mole. "Fear not!"

"Easily said, friend!" but the Mole laughed uneasily. "Come on, then."

Domont was drawn down the narrow flight of stairs. He marveled at the unerring manner in which the Mole guided him in this dense blackness, for he could tell that other passages lay all about. Now they went up long steps that seemed without end until suddenly the Mole paused and shoved open a wooden panel.

"A disused room at the top of the Degree. This way!" he panted hoarsely.

Domont followed him through a doorway, sucked the fresh night air into his lungs and then realized their position.

To the right was the upper portion of that great stairway called the Inner Degree, and behind were the abbatial buildings. To the left was sheer walled precipice. They stood on the short battlement which led to the south platform, a few feet ahead. This platform was small, walled in on two sides by the church, on the third by the great stairway that led down into blackness, and was open only to the southern side where lay the precipice. By going on through the basilica, one might gain the great west platform.

"He is coming," muttered the Mole, looking down into that abyss which was the Inner Degree.

The slap of ascending sandals could be heard echoing and reechoing faintly from the high walls, but Brother Simon carried no light. There was still a faint light on the platform, coming from the last remnants of afterglow in the sky overhead, where the stars were as yet glimmering only faintly.

"Meet him, talk with him," said Domont calmly. "I'll tap him behind the ear."

The Mole slipped across to the church entrance, keeping close to the wall, then returned openly and crossed to the head of the great stairs, as if on his way down. The huge figure of Brother Simon appeared climbing to the platform, puffing a little, and then uttered a sharp ejaculation at sight of the Mole. Domont, crouching at the wall-angle, was invisible.

"Ho, my little Mole, whither flittering so late? Now stop and talk a while," said Brother Simon with a savage undertone in his voice.

The Mole halted.

"Who is it? Ah, Brother Simon! Why, I thought that Brother Gregory had been assigned to night duty."

"Ar-r-r, you hypocritical little imp of the ——!" snarled the fat monk in a burst of fury. "You will write letters to the king's deputy, eh? Prying and peering, sticking you nose into the business of other folk!"

"A mole burrows, Brother Simon. Why not I?" The little twisted man attempted a faint-hearted facetiousness. "If you drug a man, should I not tell of it? If you filch a cutlet from the kitchens of a fast day, should I not tell of it? Aye, or be myself a party to the sin?"

"Sing your song, Brother Mole, and ring your bells and trim your quill," broke in the other, his voice ominously low and deadly. "You'll have a little more time to do it! Here's your letter. Take it again. Much good may it do you on the Saturday!"

Brother Simon viciously flung down the crumpled ball of paper. The Mole stooped and gathered it up.

"And why," he asked, "on the Saturday?"

"Because then the delegate from Caen comes for you, dealer in the black arts that you are!" snapped the furious monk, and shook his fist wildly. "You told the truth, when you said the other day that you'd been following me. Perdition seize you, now you'll give up a few of your secrets on the rack!"

The Mole stood as though frozen by horror. And so indeed he was.

"Saturday!" he repeated, and his voice came in a low wail.

"Aye, you abominable little miscreant!" exclaimed Brother Simon. "Off you go to stand trial—you and your flitting of nights! When they get through racking you, there'll be a fine burning, you little devil's spawn! Aye, shrink back. For half a sol I'd throw you over the parapet yonder and let you fly to your father the fiend!"

Brother Simon was in furious rage. With the last words, he lunged swiftly forward as though indeed to seize the wretched creature before him.

This sudden lunge spoiled Domont's aim in the obscurity. He had flung himself from the shadowed angle, launching a terrific blow for the side of the big monk's chin. Instead his fist only sank into the fat neck. The weight behind that blow fairly knocked Brother Simon off his feet. Domont went with him, over-balanced, and the two men crashed headlong on the flagstones.

Beyond a low, gasping grunt of sheer rage, Brother Simon uttered no word. Domont was half erect again when a threshing foot took him in the side and hurled him backward full length. He rolled over, dimly perceived the huge figure of Simon rising, and sprang to his feet. Simon paused for nothing, but drove in at him like a madman, and Domont met him with two full, smashing blows in the face which utterly failed of any effect. Next moment he was caught in a grip of iron.

"Now squeal, pig, whoever you are!" snarled Brother Simon.

In that tremendous grip, if it were to endure, Domont at once knew himself lost beyond hope. His only chance was to break it asunder. His fists hammered Brother Simon paunch and jowl, and his blows had absolutely no result. The two locked figures reeled back and forth, brought up against the side wall, staggered over against the knee-high parapet. Ever that frightful crushing grip grew more tight, as Brother Simon put forth his giant strength. Domont felt himself slowly suffocating, felt his ribs giving way, saw before his eyes bright flashes of darting light.

Frantic, desperate, he managed at last to get his head down underneath that huge chin, locked his arms about the immense body, and then shoved. Not even the fat monk could stand against this. Brother Simon grunted, gasped, relaxed his hold slightly. Instantly Domont was free, and hammered in a lightning-swift buffet, receiving in turn a smash that knocked him a dozen feet away, drove him staggering and reeling against the parapet, all but hurled him over the edge into the gulf. And as he gained his balance, the huge figure of Brother Simon swept forward on him with a snarl of rage.

Domont, trying to evade that rush, slipped and fell prostrate.

He received a terrific kick that doubled him up for an instant, then desperately twisted aside, rolled over, came to his feet in time to get home a blow to the paunch that staggered the fat monk. He followed it with another. Blind to all around him except that looming black figure, carried out of himself by the savage frenzy of right, Domont whipped in blow after blow in a fury of energy. He was lost to everything except the necessity of hammering this great bulk into silence and subjection. His fists sank home repeatedly, hammer-like drives that would have subdued any other man, but now had no effect. Twice Brother Simon fastened a deadly grip upon him, twice Domont smashed it clear with mad lunges. Both men fought with an utter ferocity as blind as it was heedless. For the third time, Brother Simon got in his grip. Domont buried one fist in the fat paunch, drove the other up to the big chin, lashed in a third blow that sounded on the night like a whipcrack. A fourth—

That fourth blow missed. Brother Simon fell away from it, seemed suddenly drawn backward by an invisible hand. One frightful scream burst from his lips, one scream that rang out, then wailed away on the night and was gone. His great body was gone also. Domont's eyes cleared, to find himself standing at the very parapet of the platform, in front of him nothing but empty darkness, and that horrible wailing scream echoing in his ears.

Domont took an abrupt step backward, and stood panting, trembling. Thin and startled cries came sounding up from the ramparts. Voices sounded far down the black abyss of the Great Inner Degree. Then Domont found the Mole at his elbow tugging frantically at his arm.

"God forgive me. I tripped him and you struck. Back with you! Quickly, back, back by the way we came."

Domont allowed himself to be guided, only dimly realizing the truth. They were swallowed up in the darkness. Not until he was on the narrow and damp-dripping stairs did he fully comprehend what had taken place. Then, as his brain cleared and drove into action, he gripped more tightly to the hand of the Mole.

"Wait! After this we dare not risk more delay. Can you have a boat awaiting us all tomorrow night?"

"If I have money, yes. I have none."

"Here is money." Domont feverishly searched his pockets, pressed gold coins into the Mole's hand. "Arrange everything. In case anything happens that I fail to see her, you must see the niece of Baron de Karque. Tell her I'll come for her an hour before midnight—no, at high tide, whenever that befalls. Be ready yourself, and warn the Nameless Exile. You understand?"

"Yes. Where will we go?"

"To St. Malo and find that lugger, if possible. We'll do our best. You're willing to make the attempt?"

"Yes."

After this one word, the Mole was silent for a moment. Then, when he spoke, it was with an indescribably mournful intonation.

"But, my friend, it was I who tripped Brother Simon. It is I who have shed the blood of a monk in this place that is holy ground. For that deed, there will be punishment, I warn you!"

"If we stay here, there'll be destruction for us all," snapped Domont, and the vibrant timbre of his voice rang hollowly back from the stones.

"Very well. It shall be done."

Fifteen minutes later, from the window of his prison chamber, Domont saw the flickering flare of torches below on the terraces, where men brought in the lifeless body of Brother Simon, whose ambitions were now satisfied for all eternity.

CHAPTER XII

THE KING'S SECRET

ON THURSDAY morning Domont opened his eyes to streams of warm sunlight, and heard a rattle at his door. One of the servants was just bringing his breakfast, for this thin and simple meal was served in the prison cells. Domont sat up, and then was made to remember the previous night's happenings by his bruises. He swiftly found, however, that except for a soreness in the side where Brother Simon's foot had caught him, he was little hurt, and was not marked in the face.

The domestic entered, set down the tray and paused.

"Eh, monsieur, you heard the commotion last night?"

"I saw torches and heard voices," returned Domont carelessly. "What was it?"

"Terrible work, monsieur!" came the eager response. "Brother Simon fell from the south platform. No one knows how it happened. A terrible thing, this sudden transition. Holy St. Michel preserve us from the like! But that is not all, monsieur."

Here the servant lowered his voice fearfully, fastened his wide gaze in Domont.

"Brother Gabriel was at prayer, and two of the guards were just below; they all heard the sound of rushing wings, and queer voices calling through the air. One of the guards beheld something soar from the south platform and then rush into the sky and vanish. You comprehend, monsieur? Poor Brother Simon, known for his piety and good works, must have met the foul fiend in combat. Indeed, it is certain."

Domont laughed in sudden relief.

"Then St. Michel failed signally to protect his own," he commented. "Perhaps Brother Simon was not so holy after all, since he was worsted in the combat."

"Sacrilege, monsieur!" exclaimed the servant indignantly, then shrugged. "However, one must admit there is something in that view of the matter. Undoubtedly, the poor brother was taken in some moment of temptation. The prior will pass judgment upon this, and we may well leave it to him. The burial takes place an hour before nones, if you desire to attend."

The domestic went on about his work, and Domont sat down to his meal, an ironical smile touching his lips. It was certain that no human agency was suspected of having any hand in the death of Brother Simon. So much the better, then. Perhaps the defunct brother would go far toward sainthood ere the matter was done with. So the escape was definitely set for tonight! Now, with the morning sunlight and the blue sky overhead to lend sanity, Domont keenly regretted that hasty decision. Panic, fear of crowding incident, suspicion of the unknown, had driven him to it on the spur of the moment, but in view of what he had just learned, there seemed to be no necessity. True, with wind and tide aiding, they might hope to reach St. Malo sometime in the morning if they got away without alarm toward midnight; but it was a tremendously uncertain chance. Again, there was St. Martin to consider, an overlooked equation. If they did not find him aboard the lugger, if he had started back for the Mont, the game was lost. Domont could not find it in his heart to abandon the Canadian.

"Plague take it, I was too hasty! I've bungled everything in this whole affair from the very start," he thought uneasily. "As it now stands, Brother Simon is safely out of the way. The chances are excellent that de Lussan will also be out of the way by tomorrow night. And yet, there's the Mole to think of! If he's to be carted away on Saturday, as Simon said, we'd be helpless. Hm! It's a queer problem, taken all around."

An hour afterward, in troubled thought, Domont issued from the gloomy portal of the Chatelet, regretfully wishing that he might get hold of some tobacco, yet not daring to seek any here. Sieur Roger d'Aumont, obviously, was no pipe user. As he strolled down past the parish church of St. Pierre toward the town below, Domont observed groups of pilgrims and townfolk and guards, who were all excitedly discussing the mysterious death of Brother Simon, many of them on the way to visit the spot where the late brother had come to earth. From the talk he overheard, Domont gathered that the fall had completely done away with all marks of combat. He was passing on down the narrowing street of booths and hostelries, when he started suddenly and came to a halt.

"Rodomont!"

Domont glanced around. There was no one in sight whom he knew, yet he had certainly heard the word uttered. Now he caught it again, this time in a laughing voice that struck amazed recognition into him.

"Rodomont! Look up, man, look up!"

Gaping upward, Domont beheld St. Martin waving a hand to him from an upper window of the Licorne tavern. A sharp word broke from him.

"Take to cover. Red belts are out for you!" he exclaimed swiftly, knowing that this redskin jargon was beyond the understanding of any one who might catch his words. "I'll come up at once."

Domont entered the tavern and was directed to St. Martin's room on the floor above. In another moment he was gripping the hand of the Canadian.

"How on earth did you get here?" he exclaimed, wondering. "The alarm's out for you. The Mole tells me that de Lussan has sent out orders to Avranches for your arrest, and every road is being scoured for you!"

St. Martin chuckled widely.

"Faith, he forgot to issue the orders here at home, then! And I didn't come by road, for that matter, but by sea. Landed here at sunrise this morning. Fishing-boat from St. Malo. I've just been getting a shave and a change of clothes."

"The lugger, you found her?"

"Aye, and that road-belt of the maid's was a good one. The lugger puts out with the ebb this afternoon, and ere midnight will be cruising off Tombelaine, hanging on and off until morning. If nothing shows, she'll come back Sunday."

"Ah, thank heaven!"

Domont dropped into a chair with an exclamation of tremendous relief. Everything was settled now, by this unexpected turn of chance! He disregarded the astonished look of the Canadian.

"You had no trouble getting in here?"

"A bit. The guards remembered me, and were not interested in the least." St. Martin's swarthy face settled in a frown as he scrutinized his friend. "But what's happened to you? You look uneasy! And faith of a Mohawk, who's been hammering you? Coat torn and a swelling to your jaw that a fist must have made. Eh? Come, what's the yammering I've heard from the street ever since I landed, about some monk falling from the walls? Had you a hand in that business?"

"Both hands, and the Mole a foot." Domont drew a long breath. "Comrade, this news of yours about the lugger is like a dispensation of providence, and perhaps it's just that. We were making all plans to break for it tonight in a fishing boat, at all hazards. It was tonight or never."

"Bah!" St. Martin leaned his chair back against the wall and put his feet on the table, grinning. "You haven't heard my real news yet. I've something worth while! But go on and deliver all your belts first. Need any tobacco? I brought along an extra supply in case yours had run low.

Domont seized upon the proffered weed and filled his pipe avidly. Now he imparted the situation of affairs in brief words. By the time his pipe was alight, the Canadian was fully informed of how matters stood at the Mont.

"Hm!" St. Martin rubbed his chin reflectively. "Red axes are out after me, and no mistake! I'll lie low here today and pretend illness. No great pretense to it either, after tossing on that accursed sea all night. The boat's gone back already, a hired craft. You've danced the scalp of that fat monk, have you? Good riddance. How many of us to get away? You, I, the Mole, the yellow-haired girl—"

"And the Nameless Exile," said Domont.

The other started suddenly.

"Ho! —— take me, but I forgot my news! He goes with us, does he? Have you seen him? How?"

Having already explained the nature of the Mole's burrowings, Domont now told of his silent interview with the mysterious prisoner of the Perrine tower. As he listened, St. Martin's eyes were sparkling, blazing, vibrant with excitement, but he said no word until Domont had quite finished. Then he held up his finger.

"Now, listen! Night before last I was drunk. I was in worse case than an Ottawa newly come to Montreal. You see, I fell in with a Greek merchant on his way to England. He was a jolly soul, and full of stories, and we saw most of St. Malo in company. One of his stories was about some Armenian king, which made me remember the little man we rescued on the road. So I got him drunk and got drunk myself and wormed the whole blessed yarn out of him. It took some doing, for he was afraid to talk about it at first. There's a chance that it concerns the Nameless Exile here. It's about a man named Avedis—"

"Avedis?" exclaimed Domont, amazedly. "Avedis Vertabed?"

"By the mass, that's it!" St. Martin's fist crashed triumphantly on the table. "Eh? What do you know about it?"

"Nothing!" said Domont. "The prisoner can talk no language we know. The Mole says his name is Avedis Vertabed, but we cannot find who he is or what he is."

"Then, by the saints, here's the whole belt as I received it!" St. Martin lowered his voice, took his feet from the table, leaned forward eagerly. "Avedis what's-his-name was the pope or patriarch of the Armenian church, whatever that is. He was a great man and a patriot, and was high in favor with the Turkish sultan at Constantinople, who ruled his country. Our little painted puppet of a King Louis was busy with intrigues around the sultan, and tried to bring all the Armenians into the true faith. I don't understand it rightly, for it's some cursed theological problem. At all events, with the help of the English, this patriarch fought the French intrigue tooth and nail. It became an international affair, until the whole Levant trade hung on the issue. So what happened? Nobody knows for sure, but my Greek merchant affirmed that the French ambassador, Marquis de Fevréol, was deeply concerned in it. At all events, the Armenian patriarch vanished overnight. He's never been heard of since then. And there's the game for you!"

WITH a wave of his hand, St. Martin leaned back and gazed at his friend. Domont nodded slowly.

"Like enough. So this is why the English want to get in touch with him, eh? Look you, comrade! Mary Suffolk tells me that if we get him safe to London, it'll be twenty thousand pounds in our pockets. How's that, eh? Well, it's not for this that I'm helping him get away, but it'll be a welcome sum all the same. If we can win the game tonight, I stand to gain more than the money."

"So?" queried the Canadian, with a shrewd look. "And what's worth more than money? At a venture, I'd say a pretty head of yellow hair. Eh, comrade?"

"*Touché!* At least, I hope so," admitted Domont frankly. "As things are now, I'm a pauper, without a shilling in the world except the money we got for that diamond, which will assure us passage home at least. But if we can get our fingers on this big sum, which we'll split four ways with the Mole and Mary Suffolk, then what? I can ask some one to start life with me in Boston, leave off fur-raiding and go into respectable trading. You see? It's a droll gamble."

"Droll, sure enough," responded St. Martin thoughtfully. "Here we started out by saving a poor —— on the road from the king's men. Now it seems that your whole future in life depends on running the ball between the posts! Twenty thousand pounds, eh? A high price to pay for a cleric, but I suppose worth it. Get that bottle of wine on the table in the corner, comrade. We'll drink to the patriarch, the Mole, and the pretty girl under the baron's roof! Still, you're a cursed fool to let such an event hang on that money."

"Why a fool?" demanded Domont from the corner.

"If I loved a girl, the foul fiend take money or its lack! She'd come with me for love, not for ease. If she wouldn't run my road, she could take her own trail, and the —— go with her!"

Domont laughed and came back to the table with the wine.

"Aye, but no two of us are built alike,

comrade. Now, you're sure the Dutch lugger won't fail us tonight?"

"Not she. The skipper is no Dutchman, but an Englishman, and a man of quality if I know anything! He's to carry a green light at the masthead, until dawn. Well, here's a health to the lass and luck all around!"

The pewter mugs clanked over the table.

Domont now impressed on the Canadian the importance of keeping under cover for the day. If de Lussan had sight of him or learned that he was here, he would be arrested without delay and the game would be up. St. Martin, being somewhat in arrears of sleep, readily promised to spend the remainder of the day in bed, and upon this agreement Domont rose to depart, for it was now close on noon.

"Farewell until tonight, then," said St. Martin. "Where do we meet?"

"I must come down here in any event to get Mary Suffolk," returned Domont, "so why not pick you up at the same time? I'm not certain of the hour at all. But I'll meet you an hour before midnight, if you'll be here at your window. Whether we go around the island or back to the abbey, I know not. The Mole will have it all arranged. Leave it to him."

"With all my heart," said St. Martin, and pulled off his boots.

Domont left the tavern in high spirits, feeling that luck had now swung definitely in their favor. This unexpectedly happy and lucky meeting with St. Martin and the certain arrival of the lugger that night, marked the turning-point. Upon this, more and more large loomed the importance of what had previously been no more than an afterthought, the escape of the Armenian patriarch.

As St. Martin had said, Domont could now feel his entire future depending on this event and on the twenty thousand pounds involved. With his share of such a reward safely in his pocket, he could ask Mary Suffolk to seek the New World in his company. Without it, he was a penniless adventurer who might ask no woman to share the discomforts and privations of poverty in that land across the water.

So, turning over these eager and hopeful thoughts in his mind, he had climbed as far as the parish church, when he discerned Baron de Karque coming down the road toward him. The nobleman hailed him with hearty greeting.

"How now, d'Aumont, well met! Come back down this cursed hill with me and join us over a fat capon that's browning beside a pheasant. No protests, now. The little Elise will be joyous of your company."

"With the best grace in the world," assented Domont, and turned down the hill again. "Have you been inspecting your abbatial domain so early, or—"

"I've been up at the funeral of that fat monk who fell over the wall last night. I owed him a bit of decency, pardie! It'll need a few bottles to wash the taste of the *miserere* out of my mouth, though. De Lussan's a madman!"

"Eh? What?" Domont turned to him suddenly. "What do you mean?"

"Well, there's something amiss with him," insisted the baron. "He's planning mad schemes as I happen to know. And you should have seen him up there just now! He stood gawking like a fool, and signed himself like a man in dream. Well, in the midst of death we are in life, so enjoy it while we can! Dom Julien gave the corpse a noble absolution. You should have been there to hear his discourse."

Domont was nothing loath to let himself be taken down to the King's Gate. Upon gaining his apartments, the baron ushered his guests into the presence of Mary Suffolk, then excused himself. Alone with the girl, Domont seized his opportunity.

"You've not seen the Mole? Then be ready an hour before midnight, tonight. St. Martin is here, the lugger will arrive tonight for us, and I'll come for you. Is all well?"

"So far as I know." Exultation flashed in her dark blue eyes, and then she regarded him curiously for an instant. "You seem very happy today, Rodomont!"

"Faith, I am that!" He laughed out quickly. "This night we'll earn that twenty thousand pounds, I trust, and with my share of it—"

"Yes?" she prompted, as he broke off. "What'll you do with your share of it?"

"Why, with that money in my pocket I'll be a beggar no longer, and I can ask some one to accompany me to Boston town across the water!"

"Oh!" She put her head on one side, smiling. "Who is it, then, that you're so set on dragging to the colonies?"

"That'd be telling!" Domont chuckled. "When I'm sure of that money, I'll whisper the name in your ear!"

"But you're sure of it now. I can promise definitely that the money will be paid if we succeed."

"We haven't succeeded yet, fair lady. Have a care, now—"

De Karque bustled into the room, freshly wigged and powdered, and their talk was at an end, nor was it renewed. An hour later, while the baron and Domont were discussing their wine and such topics as went with it, there arrived a messenger from the abbey. No other than the Mole, indeed. It appeared that he brought a message for Domont, and shambling into the room, the little man presented a note.

Domont half expected to find himself confronted by some new emergency. But opening the note, found it to be a request from de Lussan that he would see the latter at his earliest convenience. Grasping at the chance for speech with the Mole, Domont handed the note to the baron and made his farewells. De Karque cursed the impudence of de Lussan, but was forced to acquiesce.

"I'm going to be busy as the —— this afternoon," he growled, accompanying his guest and the Mole to the street entrance below. "I am expecting a party of cavaliers from the coast by boat. They're to make certain inspections tomorrow and be at my orders generally for a day or so, and I shall have reports to make. Come back later, if you wish, and entertain the little Elise."

"Thank you." Domont's lips twitched slightly as he bowed. "I'll promise myself that pleasure, baron, most certainly!"

The Mole grinned.

Presently Domont and the little scrivener were walking up the hill road together. Once away from the crowded taverns, Domont spoke his news.

"All's arranged with the demoiselle. St. Martin's here at the Licorne, keeping his bed for safety's sake. The lugger will be off Tombelaine tonight to pick us up."

The Mole skipped with sudden joy.

"Ha! *Los à* Monseigneur St. Michel!" he cried. Then his manner changed and he shook his head morosely. "After all, I don't know—I don't know. Something tells me that there will be bitterness before sweetness, my friend! Did you hear the bells as I tolled for Brother Simon? They said harsh things to me, sad things! And if we make the attempt tonight, it means that we must have swords; that means sacrilege, for they can come only from St. Michel's weapons."

"Bah! He can well spare them," exclaimed Domont, who was in no mood to indulge in forebodings. "And here's news for you, my friend. The Nameless Exile is no other than the Patriarch of Armenia! Let him give you absolution for your troubles, if you like. Perhaps his blessing can wipe away all sacrilege."

The Mole brightened immeasurably at this information.

"Indeed? There is truth in your words, Rodomont, truth! I always knew that the benediction of that man gave me peace. Good, good! I'll do it!"

"What does de Lussan want with me?"

"No one knows. There's no doubt that Simon put something in his wine last night. He's been like a half-dead fish all morning, but now it's different. He's been into our medicine chest, has retched himself free of poison, and is coming into the semblance of himself again. There's peril in the air, Rodomont. Watch yourself! He has the prior's permission to send for you. I know not what has passed between them, for Dom Julien is jealous of his prerogatives, but this morning he is in a black mood, I can warn you."

* * *

THEY gained the top of the street, and paused on a landing before turning toward the Chatelet and the further climb. Domont looked out across the waters to where the rock of Tombelaine lay like a crouched lion, dismantled of its old fortifications and now unpeopled.

"Hm! No doubt of our getting that boat tonight, I hope?" he asked. "De Karque expects his cavaliers of the *maréchaussée* sometime this afternoon. Will their presence make the fishermen afraid to fetch the boat for us?"

The Mole laughed sardonically.

"If a Norman can earn a gold coin, he'll brave all the powers of hell or heaven, and these men have been promised three coins each on delivery. I'll see that the boat is there, then come and bring your weapons."

"But at what time?" Domont frowned. "I've set the time for an hour before midnight. If the tide is not right—"

"It will not worry us," said the Mole confidently. "At the Fount of St. Aubert is a landing, where was once a wharf. A swift current has cut away the sands there, or perhaps it was done by the monks in the old days. At all events, except at the lowest ebb there is always a channel of water sufficient to float a boat, to the very landing. Hm! How stands the tide program? It will be at ebb an hour before midnight. Half an hour afterward the channel will fill and the boat, tied to the landing, will be afloat. Besides, the tides are high just now, unduly high, and there's a strong west wind beating in today, which means higher water tonight. Aye, no trouble at all, Rodomont! I doubt if the boat will ever touch sand tonight. If we get off at midnight we'll find a great broad channel, and the sea not far away, for the tide will come in fast. And if the west wind holds, the boat can sweep out to the north, even despite the tide."

Domont nodded, his eyes bright.

"Then it seems that heaven is fighting for us after all, and your gloomy brooding will come to naught, eh?"

"Let us hope so," returned the Mole. "I have seen the patriarch and warned him. He's eager to be off. The fever has weakened him greatly, and we can't count on his sword in case of danger."

"No matter. How shall we reach the boat? I've promised to get St. Martin and the demoiselle from down below."

"I'll free you. Bring them straight to the Chatelet, for we must go up the Inner Degree to the west platform and there take to the secret stairs. I'll have the warder dead drunk, I can promise you. The Portcullis is never down these days, either at the Chatelet or at the gate above, across the Degree. To make certain, I'll block the counterpoise."

"Good. It's understood!" Domont laughed happily, confidently, and clapped the Mole on the shoulder. "This time tomorrow, friend, we'll all be safe on our way to London, and then the New World!"

"St. Benoit grant it!" murmured the other.

Mounting the last flight of stone stairs, they entered the gloomy maw of the Chatelet.

The Mole led his companion straight to the chamber occupied by de Lussan, the same into which Domont had peered on the previous evening. At the table now sat the King's deputy, and a very different man he was. True, he was pallid and sunken in the face, but his eyes were bright and sharp, nearly normal, and at the first glance Domont saw that the man was much himself again in resolution and wits. As the two entered, de Lussan's gaze struck at them like a sword, but he listened without interruption to the sub-prior, who was standing beside him and speaking earnestly.

"If you will forward this communication, monsieur, it will be of great joy and advantage to us. The accusation which you lodged with Dom Julien this morning, that Brother Simon had drugged you, has cleared up the entire mystery and affords conclusive evidence as to the watchfulness of our patron St. Michel. It is true that Simon had abstracted the drug from our stores. He gave it to you, whether for good or ill. And what happened? Last night, two credible witnesses beheld a shape rising in the air from the south platform, whence poor Brother Simon fell to his death. It is perfectly evident that St. Michel himself avenged the affront which had been offered to the envoy of King Louis. The evidence is being set in writing by the committee on miracles, and meantime, we beg that you will forward this primary report, to the satisfaction of His Majesty."

Domont saw the Mole turn aside and give him a subdued grin at this new twist in the matter of Brother Simon. De Lussan nodded and waved his hand.

"Very well, very well," he responded impatiently. "I shall do so gladly. Now, will you ask Dom Julien to join me here in five minutes? Thank you."

The sub-prior retired. De Lussan flung an imperative gesture at the Mole, who bowed and took his leave. When the door was closed, de Lussan came to his feet and gave Domont one piercing look.

"Monsieur," he said quietly, "I have learned everything. You understand?"

"Not in the least," returned Domont. "Will you have the goodness to elucidate what you mean by everything?"

"Drop the mask," snapped de Lussan "You are not d'Aumont. You are that man with the black smudge across his face, a released prisoner returning to Boston. Where is the real Roger d'Aumont?"

So, it had come! Domont thought swiftly, knowing that the other man was in a dangerous mood, and made his decision.

"He is dead, monsieur."

De Lussan started.

"Dead! Then you murdered him?"

"No. Will you hear the story?"

"If you please."

De Lussan resumed his seat.

Domont told frankly of his meeting with Roger d'Aumont and of how he had undertaken the delivery of a letter whose contents were unknown to him. He then reported what St. Martin had told him of d'Aumont's death, and gave his own distant connection with the dead man. De Lussan leaned back in his chair, lips compressed, and did not interrupt until Domont had finished. Then:

"You forget one thing, monsieur. That is, your meeting on the road with a dark foreign man and your rescue of him. St. Martin, I believe, flung an ax?"

"I regret," said Domont calmly, "that on this point I can not inform you."

"Look out!" De Lussan leaned forward. "Monsieur, I desire a statement from you in writing, covering all this matter from start to finish. If you refuse, I shall have you brought to Paris by a special order from His Majesty; you will then be interrogated by another and more direct fashion."

"As you please, monsieur," said Domont.

The door opened and Dom Julien Doyte came into the room. De Lussan, who had been on the verge of a furious outburst, composed himself and greeted the prior courteously. His own position here was entirely on sufferance, for not even the royal deputy could issue orders in Mont St. Michel.

"Dom Julien, I am about to request that you revoke the *billet* given this gentleman," he said, motioning to Domont, "and that you hold him in close confinement, in the same manner you hold another person in the Tour Perrine. I can assure you that he will be ordered to Paris as soon as I reach there, or before. I shall leave tomorrow night, as you know."

Dom Julien regarded Domont curiously.

"If you make this request in the king's name, M. de Lussan, it is of course my duty to grant it. I hope you have not found M. d'Aumont unworthy of his parole?"

"I have found him worthy the Bastille," said de Lussan savagely. "If you'll have the goodness to order his confinement in the name of His Majesty, I shall be relieved."

The prior silently assented.

Domont, however, as he was led away to his prison room, smiled quietly to himself at thought that de Lussan had been a little late in waking up. How little was the king's name worth against one who had a Mole for friend!

CHAPTER XIII

A SPIT MAY PIERCE MORE THAN ROASTS

THAT evening, somewhat before the dinner hour, the lower town of Mont St. Michel was unwontedly full of guests. At low tide a numerous company had arrived from the mainland—not alone the usual throng of country folk, who had now returned, but a large party of pilgrims from the Rhineland, men of means and of exceeding great thirst, exultant at having finished their long pilgrimage, who took up quarters at the various inns. Later in the day had arrived by boat a score of cavaliers of the *maréchaussée*, arrived to render themselves at the orders of the abbot-baron, de Karque. Having been newly paid, these cavaliers were very thirsty men, and eager to assuage the inward burning.

The Unicorn Tavern spanned the narrow street well back from the King's gate and somewhat farther up the hill. From his window, that afternoon, St. Martin witnessed a very pretty quarrel that took place just before the Licorne. Baron de Karque was standing in the street, talking in German with some of the pilgrims, when down the hill came de Lussan in hot haste, having learned of the newly-arrived cavaliers.

He was angry, and let loose his passion at the head of the baron. De Karque, who had a high sense of his own importance and of his abbatial rights, gave him word for word and a word more to boot. Had de Lussan been armed, blood would have flown on the spot. As it was, however, de Lussan remembered that he had business of his own on the following evening. While de Karque remembered that, upon the same occasion, he would have every excuse for putting his sword through the king's deputy. So the two parted. St. Martin, smoking his pipe in shelter of his window curtain, laughed heartily to himself.

Some time later, the appetizing odors of cookery reminded the Canadian very urgently that he had forgotten to order his own supper. There ascended to him from this little street of taverns the rich fragrance of roasting meat, of broiling fish; above all, of the cockles fried in Avranchin butter and *fines herbes*—those cockles for which the Mont was famous, which were brought in by thousands from the sands at each low tide, and which were the first ambition of every hungry pilgrim.

St. Martin was not a pilgrim, but he was confoundedly hungry, having slept most of the day and missed his noon meal. So it happened that, when darkness came down and he could no longer endure the cravings of the flesh, St. Martin made his way down to the main room of the tavern. He had waited until the dinner hour was past, and could wait no more. He found the tavern nearly empty and, encouraged by this, ordered a good dinner and a bottle of wine. He then settled himself comfortably before the fireplace, to watch his fowl roasting on the long six-foot spit that crossed the hearth. It occurred to him that the bird looked lonely on that tremendous spit, so he ordered another, and sniffed the fragrance eagerly.

Presently the door swung open to admit a raucous sound of drunken songs and brawling voices from the street. The landlord rushed forward hurriedly.

"Out with you!" he cried. "I'll have none of your drinking crew here. I can't risk my good repute with the gentlemen of the abbey. Oh, sirs, your pardon!"

"Asked and given, and be ——ed to you. Put out cavaliers of the guard, would you?" broke in a gay voice. "Wine and a table, and dice! Away with you, and bring in good Gascon wine, and none of your thin *vin ordinaire*, either!"

St. Martin glanced around. He beheld two officers and two cavaliers settle themselves around a table to his left, but he paid them no immediate attention. His first fowl was done, and was being set before him, so he attacked it with his back turned to the party. The four guards had already dined, not wisely but well. They fell to their dice and wine, and St. Martin fell to his dinner.

When the first fowl was but bones, he demanded the second, and his strident voice drew the attention of the four gamesters.

"Spurs of the ——!" exclaimed the lieutenant in command. "Here's a man who must have two birds to his dinner. Health to you, empty-belly! If you can drink as you eat, you'll need a deep pocket for purse!"

"He's a hungry pilgrim, eh?" said one of the others, and there was a laugh and a jest. Then, suddenly, the lieutenant rose and came over to where St. Martin sat, and none too steadily. He stared down, and amazement leaped in his eyes.

"What's this, what's this?" he cried out. "Why, here's the very fellow we've been riding the Caen roads after. Sink me if it's not! What's your name, eh?"

"Go to the ——," said the Canadian. "If you want my name, it's the Sieur de St. Martin, of Canada."

"Hola, we have him!" cried out the lieutenant, steadying himself against the table with one hand. "Sieur de St. Martin, there's an order of arrest against you! Why every road within twenty leagues has been scoured for you."

St. Martin leaned back in his chair, having finished his second bottle before he began his second fowl.

"Well," he said coolly, "consider me arrested, gentlemen! It's safe to say that I can't get away from this sacred mount, so here I am. Suppose you join me in a bottle of wine, and when I've finished my dinner I'll join your game, eh?"

"Agreed, with all my heart!" and the lieutenant broke into laughter. Then he sobered. "is it truth that you're from Canada, monsieur? I had a cousin killed in that Hudson's Bay battle ten years ago."

"Say you so?" cried St. Martin, in whom the wine was working well. "I was there myself, and aboard Iberville's ship! Your cousin's name, monsieur?"

"De Ponfret—"

"Of the marines! He was struck at my side, died in my very arms! Monsieur, I salute you gladly!"

St. Martin came to his feet, and the lieutenant embraced him in delight. Now there was high talk, and that second fowl was long in being finished, since every one would have it that St. Martin tell of the naval fighting in frozen seas, for which he was nothing loath.

After this, if the sounds of revelry lessened up and down the street, they heightened from within the Licorne. Three more cavaliers, reeling home to their quarters from farther up the hill, wandered in and joined the dicing, and the host was kept running for wine from the cellar bins. Every one had long since forgotten that St. Martin was a prisoner, while St. Martin himself forgot all about his appointment with Domont.

Outside, the night was brilliant and cloudless, stars all ablaze across the deep bowl of the sky, and a thin slice of old moon silvering the sea. Under this faintly clear yet deceptive radiance, the ancient Mont rose like some fairy castle, its mossy battlements and spiry pinnacles transformed in the starglow, bathed in a softened and unearthly beauty that was exquisite beyond words. In the dense shadow of the Perrine Tower's outer wall, where a darker shadow gaped like a hole among the gray stones, stood two figures. Domont now wore a black friar's gown, the cowl pulled up over his head, and the Mole chuckled at his aspect.

"You have the two swords where they'll not fall and clatter? And the hoods? Good. Then go your way, friend, and if you meet any one mutter a *pax vobiscum* under your breath. You'd better go down by way of the ramparts. The fisher guards will be only too glad not to see you, and no questions will be asked of a brother, you may be sure."

"The boat's waiting?"

"Aye, money paid over, sails loosed and ready to run up, and tied to the landing. As I thought, there's a high water, and even at the full ebb they brought the boat right up to the landing."

"Right. I'll come back with them to the chatelet, eh?"

"Aye, openly. There's no danger. The warder's drunk by the guard-room fire, every one's abed, and I've fixed the portcullis. Take care of that heavier sword I gave you! It was du Guesclin's own blade."

Domont shrugged.

"I like the other better, the long rapier. St. Martin can have the historic blade, and welcome. If we get through without trouble, you can replace them, and your mind will be easier. You're going for the patriarch?"

"Aye, now. St. Michel speed you, friend!"

The Mole appeared to melt into the solid wall and vanish. There was a slight scrape of stone on stone, and Domont found himself alone.

Although it appeared rank madness to strike across that open stretch of starlight where his black figure must be startlingly distinct for any to see, Domont started for the battlements, to the left of the Outer Degree. He soon realized that the Mole had spoken truth, however. Any guards he encountered would be men from the abbey lands, heartily disgusted at their enforced service, and would be only too glad not to meet one of the monks from above.

He had speedy proof of this, indeed, as he gained the ramparts. A figure, pike in hand, started toward him and then turned away hurriedly and was lost to sight. Domont laughed and strode along at a steady, measured pace. As he reached the lower levels, he found the guards nonexistent. Beyond doubt, most of them were sound asleep in nooks and corners of the walls.

The tide was swirling in far-away channels here and there across the glittering sands, and the blue dimness of the moonlit night showed not a flicker of yellow torches anywhere. Domont quickened his pace, eagerness rising strong within him, and he could have sung aloud for sheer joy of his freedom and the promised swift action that lay ahead. All going well, no hindrance this time! Under his robe he clasped tightly the two long swords which the Mole had given him, wrapped in black hooded capes.

NOW, as he drew down to the level of the town and taverns, he heard a sudden bawling of maudlin voices. Frowning, he cautiously shortened his stride again to that of a sedate monk, and here he passed a guard, but without question. Now there loomed ahead of him the bulky round mass of the King's Tower and adjoining buildings. The platform hereabouts was all deserted, and in another moment Domont found himself beneath Mary Suffolk's window, six feet overhead.

"Here's Rodomont!" he called softly, gaily.

His answer came in the creak of an opening shutter, and he saw the girl's face looking out at him.

Having laid down his burden, carefully, he held out his arms in silent invitation, and blessed the forethought which had caused her to don a dark dress and mantle. She climbed out, poised a moment, and then let herself drop. Domont staggered under her weight, but lowered her safely to her feet. Then, for an instant, he held her there against him, and laughed into her wide eyes.

"Well done!" he murmured. "Now we're off. Here, you must don this black hood. Keep the other, and the second sword. I must get St. Martin. He'll be waiting at the Licorne."

"There are stairs here that lead to the street," she said quietly, and flung the cape and hood about her head and shoulders. "I'll guide you."

Domont put the rapier, a long and ancient weapon of fine steel, beneath his arm and followed her as she held the du Guesclin blade and led the way. Passing down a flight of wall steps, two minutes later he found himself standing in the street, on the uphill side of the spanning building which housed the Licorne. There he came to a stop in blank consternation. The front of the tavern showed lights, and from within came the sound of loud-ringing, laughing, drunken voices.

"Go on up the hill," he said quietly, and then looked up at the Canadian's window. "Ho, St. Martin! St. Martin!"

There was no response. Mary Suffolk, obeying his order, had melted into the darkness of the narrow street and was lost to sight in the shadows. Domont, giving up hope of any response from the upper window, now stepped close to the inn-front and peered through the glass at the scene inside. And there he had the answer to his perplexity.

St. Martin was there, very much there, indeed. He had arisen from the table and, standing before the wide fireplace, was just taking a cup of hot mulled wine from the host. He scowled above the flagon at his companions. Some word, some hint, had wakened his fuddled brain to a flash of uneasy memory.

"Will ye stop your bawling?" he roared out angrily. "I want to think of something. I had an appointment, and Satan grip me if I can remember."

At this there was a rousing shout of merriment.

"Ho, an appointment!" bawled the lieutenant, holding his sides for mirth. "Who's the lass this time? Breton Meg from the Head o' Gold up the street? Or that slim wench at the Trois Sauciers?"

"It's the lousy jade at the Lévrière," yelled somebody, amid a chorus of laughter. "And where's the rendezvous, St. Martin? Tell us! We'll keep it for you!"

St. Martin glowered angrily around.

"Ye shall not," he said. "Host, what's the hour?"

"It's hard upon midnight, messieurs," said the anxious and perturbed host. "The gentlemen up above will lay a fine upon me for this night's noise! Messieurs, I pray you—"

Somebody flung a tankard at the whining host. The pewter missed its intended mark but struck St. Martin squarely in the face and sent him staggering back until he brought up against the chimney-piece. With a snarled oath, the Canadian jerked his hand down, then up. His long knife sang in the air. The blade of it plunged into the throat of the cavalier who had flung the mug, and the man fell dead across the table with a great rush of blood.

There was silence for one instant, silence paralyzing and horrible. Then a yell peeled up, and there was a slithering clatter as swords whipped out. From St. Martin broke one choked, frightful cry. During this instant of silence, he had remembered everything.

Back against the fireplace, ringed in and cut off from the entrance, he cast a wild look around and saw no escape. He was unarmed, save for the tomahawk inside his shirt, but that one glance had shown him a weapon. Behind him leaned the spit which had been cleaned and stood up against the stones—a six-foot rod of whitely polished steel, hooked and turned at one end, thinly pointed at the other.

Not waiting to be rushed, St. Martin seized this weapon in both hands and hurled himself forward, his immense strength wielding that terrible steel bar like a feather. Swords licked out at him with deadly tongues. The heavy steel smashed them aside, shivered them, struck two men like a club and sent them reeling. From the right, the lieutenant drove in a thrust, but St. Martin wheeled and evaded it, then plunged his weapon at the officer. It drove through him from breast to back and stood out a hand's length from his shoulders, ere St. Martin jerked it free with a great wrench. That awful sight brought frantic madness and horror upon all who saw the thing. The scream of the dying man was drowned in a crash as St. Martin overturned the table and leaped for the doorway in that moment of sickened pause.

He gained the entrance, swung open the

door, then turned and flailed out with his weapon at those who were leaping forward. One cavalier crashed down, groaning, and the others hesitated an instant. From the rear a hand of iron clamped on St. Martin's shoulder and dragged him across the threshold into the night.

"Drunken fool!" groaned Domont in despair and anger. "Up the street with you. Go!"

He hurled the Canadian away, reeling and staggering. A burst of figures erupted at the doorway, and Domont faced them, plying that long rapier of his with rapid and desperate skill. Two men were run through the body, another groaned and collapsed on the threshold. Then, flinging off the enveloping monk's robe, Domont turned and ran.

Too late! Before he had caught up with St. Martin, there was a sudden rush of figures from all directions—from the buildings on either hand, from the guard-room of the King's Gate, from the quarters below that gate. Most of them were cavaliers, others were of the town guard, pikes glinting in the starlight. The greater part of these hesitated in uncertainty, until St. Martin swung his iron flail and sent a man screaming to the stones. With this, the crowd centered upon the two fugitives.

"To the Chatelet!" cried Domont, almost incoherent with the furious anger that was upon him. Well ahead, he caught sight of the girl's hooded figure. "On! Run, St. Martin!"

"Run yourself." From the Canadian broke a groan of remorse and wild grief. "I'll stop here and check—"

"Run!" snapped Domont, and the other obeyed that savage word and voice.

Ahead of them now sped Mary Suffolk, needing no urge. A fusil thundered and its bullet whistled eerily somewhere overhead, but there were no other shots. Firearms were very few, and those few with unlighted matches. As an alarm, this shot served its purpose, for it told the lower town that this was something more serious than a mere drunken brawl. Domont was swift to realize the most urgent peril. This came, not from the yelling swarm of figures that streamed up behind, but from the ramparts ahead. These ran almost parallel with the road, and if the guards had wits enough to collect at an upper platform, they could cut off the road of the fugitives long ere the Chatelet was reached.

Glancing back, Domont realized that the furious pursuit was rapidly gaining. Just ahead was the sharp turn of the upper street, where the road came to the rampart terraces and then swept to the left in the Great Outer Degree that ended at the Chatelet.

"Make a stand—there!" panted Domont, and the Canadian growled low assent. "On with you, Mary. Don't stop!"

Domont toiled on up the steep rise, inwardly cursing the foul luck which had brought about this uproar and now threatened to cut all their plans in the bud. He pounded past the parish church with leaden feet and drove at the steps beyond, St. Martin at his elbow. With untold relief, Domont ascertained that the platform ahead, where the ramparts curved in, was free of men. The guards had not assembled and the dark shape of the girl was flitting on toward the Chatelet. The yelling pack in the rear, however, were not a dozen paces behind, and must be halted at all costs.

"Now! At the head of those stairs!" gasped Domont, at the turn of the way.

Up the dozen long stairs they dashed, then turned suddenly and came to a pause. St. Martin leaned on the grim weapon which he still carried, and Domont's rapier glittered in the starlight. The throng below, thinking them trapped, drove upward with a howl of joy. St. Martin stepped well to one side, took the long steel bar in both hands, and whirled it.

A frightful scream of terror broke from the foremost as that flail swept on them, but those behind shoved them forward. Domont smashed aside the flickering sword-points and his rapier lunged out swiftly, once, twice, thrice. Then, when the terrible crimsoned bar of steel crushed down at them again and again, the crowd broke asunder and broke down the stairs in wild horror, leaving sprawled figures behind. St. Martin whirled up his weapon once more and sent it flying, point first, into the thick of those below. Ere his gasp of effort had died, two men were plunging away, horribly linked together.

"Run!" cried Domont, seeing a black surge of men coming by the ramparts, with pikes gleaming and thrusting. "Run! She has a sword for you."

THEY turned and flung themselves at the steep, long mount of the Outer Degree, side by side, unhurt. High ahead of them yawned the black maw of the Chatelet, low-arched, gained by a narrow and steep flight of stairs that led up between the two towers. Staggering, all but exhausted, the two men forced themselves up the last of the flight. That mad run up the steep hill, the fury of fight, had drained them. Human endurance could do no more. And ahead still loomed the tremendous climb up the Inner Degree.

Under the entrance of the arch were grouped three figures. Domont collapsed at the head of the stairway, gasping for breath. He was aware of the Mole, and beside him the towering shape of the Nameless Exile. As he sank down, Mary Suffolk caught his hand.

"You're not hurt—"

"No—winded—by climb. On with you!" Domont rallied a little. "Get the portcullis down. Close the gates."

"I have jammed them so they can not close," rang out the mournful voice of the Mole. "We can not close the way. Our friend Avedis is feeble. Ah, punishment is on us."

"Go on!" St. Martin scrambled to his feet again, seized the sword that the girl was holding. "Here's a weapon. We'll hold them here! On with you!"

"I'll wait at the west door of the church—leading to the platform!" cried the Mole's voice, and then the three figures slipped away, up toward the blackness above. The two men remained alone, gasping air into their lungs.

Domont glanced around, desperately. Below them was the Chatelet approach, steep and narrow. They stood on a wide flagged platform that opened into the guard-room and courtyard to the left. Behind them was the massive archway and black steps that led up to the Great Inner Degree itself.

"Stop them here," said Domont, "then run for it. They'll not be sure whether we went up or off to the left."

"No! No hope there," cried the other with an oath. "Torches!"

True enough. There was a glow of ruddy torch-light down below, and ahead of it a horde of figures flooding like a wave up the narrow stairs. From somewhere far above, Domont faintly heard cries of startled alarm echoing from the abbatial buildings. The very thought of that interminable climb to the west platform was benumbing. The achievement seemed beyond all hope, out of all reason.

"Ready!" grunted St. Martin.

Domont straightened. Up the narrow stairs burst the wave of assailants, but the torches were not close enough to disclose the two figures standing in the blackness of the low arch. Suddenly the long rapier and the heavy blade of du Guesclin began to bite, and here in the blackness was grim slaughter.

So steep were the stairs, built for just such work as this, that those crowding up could scarce get at the two defenders, while blade and rapier wrought bitter work on the thronging mass, until the stones ran red, and the attackers cursed as they slipped and gave backward from the assault.

Then, at Domont's word, the two men darted back, dashed across the pavement and took the flight of stairs beyond at a leap. Hopeless to evade pursuit, however, the torches had come up, and a savage yell from below showed that the way of escape was disclosed. As they topped the stairs and gained the Inner Degree, Domont glimpsed window lights flashing in the walls to the left. He caught St. Martin's arm, and here at the stair-head they paused and rested, regaining breath and strength. Ahead of them there still remained that long winding climb, now in short flights of stairs and platforms, again in the steep contours of the mounting naked rock. There was little light here from the sky, as the high walls to either hand kept the Inner Degree in blackness.

"Now," said Domont quietly, and met the attack.

It came this time in more deadly fashion, for the pike-armed guards had been shoved to the front, and their weapons lunged upward perilously, shielding the men who wielded them. Here the heavy blade was of more use than a rapier. St. Martin slashed, and as he opened a way among the pikes, Domont slipped in and drove down with the point. Men fell there, and the cursing throng recoiled, broke back.

"My folly's paid for, comrade!" St. Martin reeled away with an oath. "Leave me."

"Not I." Sobbing for breath, Domont caught the Canadian. "Where?"

"Pike-thrust—in the ribs."

"Arm around my neck. Step out with your right foot first, now! Run for it!"

Run they did, though in awkward manner, and went scrambling up the blackly mounting steep and so gained three landings before they halted. The mass below was pushing upward, and torches flared, sending ruddy streaks of light along the Inner Degree. Then, suddenly, a door burst open not ten feet from the two men, and de Lussan ran out into the increasing light, sword in hand. He saw them, and his voice screamed out in shrill rage. A moment earlier and he would have cut them off from the rear. As it was, he drove in upon them alone, while the crowd and the torches below surged upward.

Here, beneath an angle of the church apse, the way was narrow and turning, easily held. St. Martin had recovered his strength enough to meet the rush and cut down the first man, whereat the others hung back, shouting for pikes. Domont had already met the savage rush of de Lussan, and on the issue of this the others waited, also, while St. Martin leaned heavily on his blade.

"Now, devil that you are!" cried out de Lussan eagerly, as the rapiers crossed in the torchlight. "Now I have you."

"Remember the count of four!" panted Domont, and laughed harshly. "One and two—and three—and you have it at four. Take it!"

De Lussan flung out his arms wide, and his sword clattered away on the stones. Then he fell, death driven into his very heart by that long rapier. Over his falling body, Domont hurled himself madly upon the throng behind. These gave back with yells of terror as his red point bit. The torches fluttered down and lay smoking, and the crowd surged back from that wild apparition of death that smote them.

"On with you, St. Martin!" rang out the voice of Domont.

The Canadian staggered up the black road, until presently the gasping Domont was at his side again and aiding him. Here the brave blade of du Guesclin clinked dismally on the black stones and was gone.

"I can make it—with luck," panted St. Martin. "These —— stairs! Look out now. They're after us."

"Save your breath. Go on."

Domont left him to reel onward alone, and darted suddenly to one side.

Domont found a great boulder. Putting out his strength, he tugged at the boulder. It gave a little, rocked and settled back again. Desperately, frantically, Domont leaned to it, gathered his strength, braced himself against the wall behind, put forth every muscle and heaved.

The boulder was overbalanced. Then it drove down with a mighty crash, leaped into the air, thundered. One hideous yell of stark terror went shrilling up from the men below, a yell echoed and sounded back a thousandfold by the dark walls, eddying up and up like a shriek of doom.

From this terrible scattering, the men below were slow to recover. Groans and cries filled all the darkness, and the screaming of a back-broken guard.

By this time strongly reinforced anew, the throng swept past the body of de Lussan and pressed up the steep way beyond. As the torches glimmered higher, two figures were seen ahead, dragging themselves toward the last rise that led up to the south platform, whence Brother Simon had gone to his death, the very crest of the Inner Degree. None of the monks had appeared from above.

The shrill yells pealed up afresh for an instant as the two figures ahead staggered to the crest and then fell together in a heap at the top. The rushing noise of booted feet resounded from the high walls, oaths and yells for vengeance flew up the towering spires of granite overhead. Seeing the two fugitives fallen prostrate and exhausted, the blood-lust of the hunt came upon the pack below. They howled, brandished weapons in the torchlight, came rushing onward with a burst of ferocity.

This eagerness was suddenly halted.

Above them uprose St. Martin, laughing terribly, blood dark on his side, and his hand whipped back, then forward. Beside St. Martin uprose the shape of Domont, and came down headlong among the stumbling men, rapier plunging here and there, driving death into them, his face set in a mask and his red hair flying.

Once more the crowd broke back, appalled, and this time were slow to gather heart. Up above, they saw the two fugitives reel across the platform and vanish in the south entrance to the church. There was now no escape for those two men, no way out except over the battlements, no other place to flee except the sacred precincts. Sanctuary or not, they were lost!

And so the throng went surging upward, gained the platform, streamed across it and broke in upon the great church. By the torchlight, the foremost among them saw the west doors slammed shut, heard the rasp of a turned key, fell vainly to thundering at those massive doors. The fugitives were on the west platform! About the doors hammered the crowd of maddened men, until some of the guards who knew the place shouted above the din, showed the way out through the cloister and thus around to the platform. They streamed along, torches flaring, passed a huddle of frightened monks in the cloister and then came bursting out into the clear night air on the west platform—that great open platform which seemed to overhang eternity.

And this platform was empty.

CHAPTER XIV

WHAT IS WRITTEN, IS WRITTEN

GUIDED by the hand of the Mole, aiding the spent St. Martin with his other arm, Domont reeled blindly across the west platform. His lungs were afire, his calves and thighs were one intolerable ache. He had a vision of the great gulf below, and then found himself shoved at a tiny black opening.

"To the stairs. Be careful!" cried the Mole's voice, thin with excitement. A stone scraped, and sudden blackness closed them all in.

St. Martin recovered himself a little, but a moment afterward lost his footing, and only Domont's arm saved him from plunging down. Utterly spent and exhausted, Domont himself felt at the point of collapse when suddenly he turned an elbow of the steep little secret stairway and discerned a glimmer of light below. There, upon a level landing, stood Mary Suffolk and the patriarch, who held a lantern.

St. Martin got as far as the foot of the stairway. There his strength deserted him, though not his senses, and he went down in a limp heap. Domont uttered a low groan, and was shoved aside by the Mole, who knelt over the Canadian.

"Rest, both of you. I'll see to this hurt. Ah! Not dead and nowhere near it! A bandage, a cloth!"

Mary Suffolk jerked away her hooded cape, and the strong, large hands of the Mole swiftly ripped it asunder. In two minutes St. Martin was firmly bandaged about his hurt side, and sat propped against the wall. The Mole came to his feet, and his brown eyes were wide and anxious as they sought those of Domont.

"We've no time to lose! They'll search everywhere, and will certainly discover that boat if we don't reach it first. Men will be sent around the island on all sides. We must reach the staircase and the wood ahead of any who come from above, Rodomont. What, your sword gone? Both swords gone! Well, the patriarch here has another, though he can't use it. Come, on our way! Having come up, we must now go down. St. Martin, cling to me. Up with you! Death's no worse met on your feet than if you lie here."

Under that desperately encouraging voice and the strong hands, St. Martin staggered doggedly to his feet. Domont met the wide and frightened gaze of the girl, caught and held her extended hand and managed a smile.

"So you're not hurt?" she exclaimed.

"No. All well here?"

Domont, as he turned to the patriarch, saw that all was very far from being well. The man was failing where he stood, and that bearded countenance was pallid, sweat-bedewed. The brilliant, proud dark eyes rested on Domont with an expression of unutterable anguish. Then, with a little gesture as though to say that he would do his best, the Nameless Exile lifted his lantern and passed on after the Mole, his step weak and uncertain.

"He's ill," said the girl, and followed.

Domont got the Canadian's arm about his neck, and they brought up the rear. Save for the shuffling of footsteps, the musty silence that overhung them all was unbroken and heavily oppressive.

Presently they came to more stairs, steep and narrow, interminably winding, and St. Martin groaned out curses as he repeatedly lost his footing and fell against the narrow walls, to the hurt of his wounded side. Both men had been far sapped of vitality by that mad and terrific flight up the steep hillside, by the steeper climb up the Inner Degree, with all its accompaniment of bloody work. Domont was far enough gone himself to realize what must be the condition of the Canadian, aggravated as it was by hurts and loss of blood.

They reached another landing and more stairs. Ahead, Domont saw Mary Suffolk take the lantern from the trembling hand of Avedis Vertabed, take from him a sword also, and in the glimmer of light the figure of the Mole was disclosed far below, face upturned toward them.

"Hide the light!" came his guarded voice. "Hide it, but do not extinguish it!"

The girl thrust it under her cloak.

The confused din up above grew and increased rapidly, until suddenly there arose upon the night a wild jangle of bells, great and small, sending their alarm-peal far and wide. The patriarch tottered, leaned back faintly against the wall and signed to them to go on without him, but at this the Mole spoke in frantic desperation.

"Bring him, Rodomont, bring him. I'll help St. Martin! If we don't gain the stairway, we'll be cut off yet. Those bells will bring men from every direction, and the fishermen will be afraid of their necks and will tell about the boat. Perhaps they've done so already! Get him to the stairway at all costs and let him rest there until his weakness is past."

"Right. Put out that lantern. It's useless now, for the lugger can't come in at low tide," said Domont. "I'll bring our friend here."

"And I'll help," said the girl quietly.

The Mole drew the Canadian's arm about his neck and disappeared along the base of the mighty wall to their right. Blowing out the lantern, Mary Suffolk abandoned it and took one arm of the patriarch, Domont the other.

In another three minutes they had gained the head of the stairway by the path that reached it from the garden. Ahead, the Mole and St. Martin were descending toward the water. Then, as the trees rose to right and left of them, Domont felt the patriarch tremble and quiver. He paused, signed him to sit and rest, then looked around at the Mont.

The wild clangor of bells had ceased by this time, but that of voices had become a faint roar. In the town on the other side of the mount, a single bell was madly clamoring. Lights were springing to the windows of the church and the hostelry above the wood, while the glow of torches and cressets was reflected upon the spires of the Marvel, high above. Obviously, every nook and corner of the place was being searched.

"There's signal enough to your lugger!" said Domont, and laughed a little.

Then the girl seized his arm quickly, wrenched him around.

"Look! That little green star, you see? To the left of Tombelaine, this way!"

Following her pointing hand, Domont in a moment made it out—a tiny speck of green light, a pinpoint that danced and flickered to seaward of the dark mass where Tombelaine's rock crouched.

"The lugger, thank heaven! Then everything's won, dear girl, everything!"

His sudden surge of relief was tremendous. Catching sight of the sword that she held, he reached down to take it from her. Instead, their fingers met and held, and all abruptly, Domont found her clinging to him, as his arm went around her.

"Everything?" she exclaimed, her face upraised to him in the starlight, a laugh of excited happiness on her lips. "Everything?"

"Aye, if you'll have it so!" Domont cried impetuously. "Will you come to the New World with me, dear girl? Will you take my love, now that I can ask you to share it, and let me fend for you and shelter you?"

For answer she held up her lips and kissed him, and again. Both of them had quite forgotten the tall shape sitting on the steps beside them and leaning faintly against the half-ruined stone parapet.

"Mary Suffolk, you'll marry me?" exclaimed Domont after a moment, holding her at arm's length and wondering at the sheer beauty of her. "You mean it? But it can't be true. It's too great."

"Hush, silly man! Don't I love you? Yes, of course I'll marry you. Here, this very moment, if you like!"

"Eh? But how—"

She gestured, and suddenly Domont understood. A great laugh broke from him, and he swung the girl around so that they faced the drooping man at their side. A touch on the arm, and the patriarch looked up.

He was slow to get the gist of their motions, until suddenly his white teeth showed in a flash through his beard, and he dragged himself to his feet. Then, gesturing them to kneel, he spoke rapidly. If the meaning of his words was unknown, their purport could be clearly guessed. Presently, a hand on each head, he stooped and kissed them both, made the sign of benediction and caught at the parapet for support.

"Rodomont!" rose the voice of the Mole, thin and faint, from below. "Rodomont!"

Startled into sudden realization of their madness to have paused at such a moment, Domont caught up the sword at his feet, gave Mary Suffolk one swift kiss, then pushed her gently downward.

"On with you, dear wife!" he exclaimed gaily, exultantly. "On, and get aboard. I'll follow with him. We've won the game!"

In a tumult of riotous emotion, yet with triumph firing his very soul, Domont lifted the arm of the patriarch about his neck and began the descent anew. They continued, slowly but steadily, down the precipitous stairway, which had been built not for ease but for utility. From far out along the sands there sounded a hollow booming roar that seemed to run into the distance, and where a moment before had been that vast expanse of wind-dried sand beneath the thin moon, there now leaped a snowy sheet of foam—racing swiftly, swiftly, almost faster than the eye could discern it, foam that whirled and roared and swirled into ripples and eddies, and then became water again, a limpid sea of it. So the tide had come in upon the Mont, after its fashion, and the saints help any souls who had been caught by it on those sands!

They were half way down, now, the trees of the wood rising thick to right and left, cloaking them with darkness. Domont glanced back at the illuminated spires high above, and laughed again. The lugger would be on the alert now, without mistake! Then a tug at his arm, a low groan, and the patriarch halted, leaning against the parapet.

To halt here, however, were madness. Domont waited a moment, then made an imperative gesture. Avedis Vertabed motioned him to go on alone, but he dissented curtly and caught the older man's arm, helping him forward, aiding him down the steps. And little by little they made it, though the patriarch stumbled and swayed as he went, until they were a scant hundred feet from the square building and the landing below them. Then, abruptly, the patriarch went limp as a rag and pitched sidewise. Domont caught him, barely in time to save the unconscious man a nasty fall.

At the same instant, a woman's scream of startled terror rang out from the landing—a scream immediately cut short. Then the voice of the Mole rang out in alarm.

Hesitating the fraction of a second, Domont left the Armenian where he lay and plunged down the remainder of the way, baring the sword as he leaped the steps two at a time. A low call guided him to the right of the tiny building. As he darted around the side of this, he saw the boat lying there at a platform of half-shattered masonry. She was nearly level with the edge of this platform.

"Swiftly!" called the Mole, his voice urgent.

Domont sprang to his side, saw that the little man was supporting the figure of Mary Suffolk with one hand and with the other was fending off the boat from crushing her against the masonry. Domont swiftly stooped, caught her beneath the arms, and drew her clear.

"I missed my footing," she cried. "It's all right. Where's St. Martin?"

"In the boat, senseless." The Mole stood erect. "Rodomont! You've not left him?"

"He's gone to pieces, a little way back." Domont, as he spoke, helped the dripping girl into the boat. "I'll get him. All clear here?"

"Run up these sails first—they may be upon us at any moment." The Mole sprang aboard and Domont came to his help. In two minutes they had run up the little foresail and the big brown mainsail. Under the west wind, which was blowing strongly, she leaned over and tugged at her two mooring lines.

On the landing again, the Mole seized Domont's sword and with it slashed at the bow line, until it parted. Then he caught up the other rope, unwound it from a jagged bit of granite and stood holding it. This line alone held the boat to the landing.

"Go and get him, quickly!" he exclaimed, and Domont departed at a run.

As he went, he heard the girl's voice rising from behind.

"I'll take the tiller. I can handle a boat perfectly."

A laugh broke exultantly upon Domont's lips as he dashed up the stairs. What a woman he had won this night! Then the laugh died out, suddenly, as from up above broke out a red flare of torches, and he saw men descending the upper portion of the staircase.

In frantic desperation he quickened his

pace, reached the dark figure of Bishop Avedis, found the latter still senseless. Domont stooped, caught a wild cry from the Mole below and then, with a mighty effort, heaved up the body of the patriarch and shouldered it. He staggered, nearly lost his footing, blood surged with a rush into his brain. Then he came erect, balanced himself and started the descent.

A despairing oath broke from him at this unforeseen crisis. From above, he could hear the leaping outburst of yells which told that he had been sighted. If only he had not stayed to get those sails up! If only he and Mary Suffolk had not—

He choked down that thought, and reeled on down the stairs, while the chase became hotter up above. A pistolet barked out and the ball flew close. The ruddy torchlight was drawing nearer, lighting everything with distinctness. Down below, he glimpsed the grotesque figure of the Mole dancing on the landing, signaling him to hurry. Then, at the very bottom step, Domont lost his footing and his balance together, and came crashing down with his burden.

Maddened by this desperate mischance, he scrambled up and once more stooped to his load. Sparks of fire were glimmering before his eyes, a terrible weariness weighed upon him. But he rose with the inert figure in his arms and went stumbling onward. Then, as he turned the corner of the little building, he heard one sharp, frightful scream from the Mole. A tall figure leaped up, dashed aside the little man, seized upon the rope, and from all sides came other figures scrambling over the platform.

Caught! Even then, Domont made one tortured effort to break through and make the boat, but it was useless. A man caromed against him, the limp body of the patriarch went slipping from his arms, he himself tottered blindly. The man with the rope hauled out a pistolet and fired pointblank. With a low cry, Domont put both hands to his head at the stab of pain, then his senses left him and he fell headlong from the edge of the landing into the boat, and lay quiet.

"We have them!" shouted the man with the rope, and tossed away his pistolet. "We have them! Come."

His words ended in a deathly gurgle, and he sank backward. In his place rose the Mole again, holding the forgotten sword that Domont had left on the landing. One shrill cry wailed from his lips.

"Punishment, punishment! Get away while you can."

With his foot, the Mole kicked aside the end of the fallen rope, then hurled himself upon the two men who gripped the boat to the landing. One of them he ran through. The other rose and grappled him, bore him backward. Others leaped upon him at once. From the surging pile of men there arose a low, mournful cry.

"Punishment!"

The cry died away into a strangled sob. The boat, heeling to the wind, darted away and was gone across the starlight, toward a glimmer of green that hung low on the horizon.

CHAPTER XV

THE LIE

WITH a stiff breeze bowling her well over and the Chausey archipelago behind on the horizon, the lugger smashed through the water at a rousing clip. Sunrise reddened on her canvas, found her well out of danger and speeding out for the channel and the English shores, with no pursuing speck on the seas.

Domont, his head bandaged where that pistolet's lead had smitten him, now sat under the weather rail as he had been sitting for hours and stared blankly out at the thin purple line which marked the cliffs of Normandy. Speaking to none, he had silently sat there through the darkness and dawn, blind and deaf to everything passing around him. If tears had furrowed his cheeks at thought of the little Mole whose supreme sacrifice had bought escape for them all, they were dry now. Yet the dull despair in his heart was clearly mirrored in his haggard countenance.

"Rodomont!"

Domont glanced around. St. Martin was coming toward him, painfully clawing his way along the rail, a seaman's jacket buttoned over his bandaged chest and shoulders. The lugger's captain and one of his men stood beside the helm, watching both passengers with very curious eyes, but St. Martin ignored them. He looked more dark and fiercely stern than ever, and as he gained Domont's side, letting himself to the deck, a savage oath of pain was wrenched from his lips.

"We're here." St. Martin took out his pipe and began to shred tobacco into it. "Still thinking of the Mole, comrade?"

"I'll think of him a long while," said Domont slowly, with indescribable bitterness in his face and voice. "Won't you?"

St. Martin quivered a little as those words bit into him, but his dark gaze lifted firmly to that of Domont.

"No need of such a thrust, comrade," he said, and then, despite his words, furtively signed himself. "I don't believe in it. Yet didn't he say there'd be punishment for what had happened? Well, it may be that he was right. Rodomont, I'd give my own life gladly to undo what my folly caused last night."

"You might well say so," said Domont in an even, terrible tone, staring into the eyes of the other man without flinching. "You caused it."

St. Martin paled a little.

"Yes. But for my drunken folly, we'd have slipped away from that accursed place with no trouble. Well, it can't be undone now, and that only makes it the more bitter to the taste. Comrade, do you think the Mohawk stake can be half so bad as the mortal hurt of vain regret? Do you think the pains of hell itself would be worse than what gnaws at me this minute?"

Suddenly Domont saw behind the steady, imperturbable mien of the man to the hurt and writhing spirit of him, tortured by a remorse that could not be quelled. And then St. Martin looked into his eyes and spoke quietly, curtly.

"Comrade, will you forgive me?"

Domont reached out and caught the brown, hard hand.

"Ah, St. Martin, I've nothing to forgive! It's you who must forgive my reproach."

The captain of the lugger left the helm, saluted the two of them as he passed and strode on up forward. Domont paid him no heed.

"You have much to forgive," said St. Martin. "You've a letter to further that girl's cause, where you might have had a man. And all my fault. You're hurt, hurt in body and spirit, and that's my fault too. You've lost twenty thousand pounds."

"Oh, silence! —— take the twenty thousand pounds!" cried out Domont in a tortured, anguished voice. "Do you think I care about that accursed blood-money? Did I want it for myself? God knows, if I had it in my pocket this minute, and could barter it for the Mole's life, how gladly I'd do it!"

Then a voice spoke from behind him.

"Rodomont, would you barter your wife also?"

Domont started, turned around, saw her standing there gazing at him, and pulled himself to his feet. He took her hand and bowed over it and, as he met her half-smiling gaze, the gayness of it brought a welter of accusation into his eyes, until they burned against the pallor of his face.

"What do you mean?" he demanded harshly. "Is it a thing to jest with?"

Then, to his quick astonishment and shame, he perceived how bravely false had been that smiling greeting. For her hands gripped tightly on his and tears were springing to her blue eyes and her lips were quivering.

"Ah, I know how you feel, dear man!" she exclaimed, unsteadily. "I know, and I share all your helpless grieving. But listen, there's a time for all things, and now I must ask you something, Rodomont. Were we really married last night?"

Domont met her gaze, and found it unreadable behind the brimming tears.

"Yes." He nodded slowly as he spoke. "Yes, I believe we were, poor girl!"

"Are you sorry, then?" she demanded.

"I am sorry," he returned, unflinching. "Oh, if I'd but known, if I'd but guessed. Fool that I was, to think all so safe and certain! And now what have you to face, poor Mary who loved me? Marriage to a penniless beggar, a man who at best can hope to find some employment as a ship-captain, a man who can barely get you home again with what little money he has left! And once we get home to that town overseas, what's to face? The grinding bitterness of poverty. I can't have you face it for love of me."

He broke off abruptly, his lips clenched, a gulp in his throat. Mary Suffolk smiled a little, and her fingers closed more tightly on his.

"Let that pass. Even if it were true, I'd be glad of it for love of you, Rodomont," she returned. "And that's what I meant by bantering you. For consider, dear man! It was the Mole gave us to each other after all, it was his sacrifice which now lets us stand here hand in hand today!

"Ah, Rodomont!" Her voice was very tender now. "You're a poor, lonely man, and won't you let me take you to my heart and comfort you with love? Won't you stand hand in hand with me and face the years, and all that must come of good and ill, if I'm willing and glad? Aye, even if the worst that you fear were true, if you were a beggar as you say, I'd be so glad, so glad."

Domont blinked, and bit fiercely at his lips. Then his head fell forward and, for a moment, he folded the girl in his arms. The helmsman, who had caught all this, grinned widely and looked at St. Martin. But when he met the eyes of the Canadian he lost his grin, of a sudden, and hastily turned to look at the canvas above. Domont gently released the girl, held her off at arm's length and regarded her with a steady glow of warmth in his eyes.

"Ah, true heart!" he said gently. "Yes, what's the money after all? It was only for your sake that I wanted it. If it's lost, I can get it again."

"You can get it again," she repeated, and a swift little glint of laughter danced in her misty eyes. "And now, Rodomont, will you have the captain marry us again? And yet again a priest when we get to England? Oh, I want to be sure of you, very sure of you, triply sure! I must be sure!"

"I'll do whatever you wish," he responded. "But why must you be so sure of me? How can you be ever more certain than you are now, Mary Suffolk?"

"Because, as I told you one day, I lied to you!" she exclaimed. "I told you a lie, and now I'm frightened and shamed to think of your discovering it."

Domont laughed out suddenly.

"If you'd told me ten thousand lies, my heart, would I not love you the more? Nay, say no more about it. If you wish further bonds, we'll marry here with the captain and again in London and again in Boston town and a dozen times more! As for the lie, let it go, whatever it was. It matters nothing."

"But it does," she insisted gently. "Will you marry me now, Rodomont, and afterward hear my confession?"

"Aye, and give you absolution beforehand."

"On your word of honor? It will make no difference to you and me or our love?"

"On my word of honor." Domont glanced around whimsically. "St. Martin, for the love of heaven go get that captain, will you?"

St. Martin grinned, hauled himself up and started forward. He was not certain what it was all about, but the remorse and bitter grief had been lifted from Domont, and momentarily from his own soul as well. He found the captain on the deck forward, and addressed him.

"Come along aft," he said. "They want you to marry them. They seem to be married already, and must have a passion for the ceremony, but they're to be humored."

The captain laughed.

"Married, eh? Ah, but he's a lucky dog, that. Stap me, if there won't be tall talk from London to Bath over this! Why, I don't know if I have the right. Still, if they wish it, let them have it! But mark me, there'll be talk."

"What the —— do you mean by that?" demanded St. Martin, half angrily. "My friend, I don't relish your words by a good deal. You may be a captain in the king's navy and a cursed fine gentleman to boot, but Rodomont's my friend. What mean you?"

"Pox take me, man, I meant no offense!" exclaimed the other, with a laugh. "But you know, surely, that Lady Mary—"

"Eh? Who's Lady Mary?"

"Lady Mary Suffolk, she who came aboard with you and who's standing there aft to be married! Isn't she one of the queen's ladies, and said to own a tenth of the land in all west London, besides broad estates in Norfolk and elsewhere? Why, she's the biggest catch that ever was!"

"Oh!" St. Martin's jaw fell.

He stared at the captain, then turned about to stare at the two who stood arm in arm on the afterdeck, and his eyes bulged. Then suddenly he recovered himself and caught the captain by the arm, swinging him around.

"For the love of the saints, go and marry them before he finds it out, or I'll put my knife into you!" he cried.

THE END

No Law

by Barry Scobee

Author of "Native Born," "Empty Cartridges," etc.

STOGGINS enlisted in the Army to eat. He'd strayed away from railroading and teaming and cement mixing down into the Southwest where towns were few and far between and jobs were fewer and farther. The Army was the last call to dinner.

Stoggins turned to it contemptuously. Of all the tweedle-de-dee on earth the Army was the worst.

From the pinnacle of two and a half to five dollars a day he and his kind had looked down on the tin sojers and their paltry pay, calling them "purty" boys, monkeys-on-a-string, flunkies, saluters and Uncle Sam's pets.

He smirked behind his hand when he took the oath and told himself he'd desert as soon as times got better.

He was assigned to a cavalry outfit on the Texas-Mexico border. When, on the last leg of the journey, the big Army truck in which he was riding trundled out of the last hills, there lay before him a shelving slope of ten or fifteen miles down to the Rio Grande; then the boundary river itself, marked by greenery, and beyond the river the gray-dun wastes of Mexico.

A vast and empty land it was, shimmering in the white sunlight, where nothing moved, where nothing seemed to live, extending from the front truck-wheels to remote and hazy mountains, and up into the cold blue sky until one could imagine he was riding through space on a planet.

Stoggins chuckled. The driver, who each trip was awed by this explosion of vastness in his face, started and frowned.

"Don't see how they keep you fellers corraled," smirked Stoggins.

"What d'y mean?"

Stoggins' thick arm swung at the vastness stretching out east, south, and west.

"No fences," he said, "no roads, no towns, no—law."

"No law," repeated the driver. "This view hits 'em all different, but that's the queerest one yet—no law."

"No law—that ain't bad, is it, guy?" Stoggins swung his arm again. "Hits the nail on the head, huh? They'd have a brittle time of it keepin' me in the Army, salutin' and monkey-drillin' and dangling around with all this vacant terr'tory to hide in."

His little eyes twinkled at the way he'd throw the Army and seek these lawless spaces. He spat tobacco juice over the front fender and chuckled his contemptuous mirth.

* * *

IN THE days that followed, Stoggins was beguiled by his phrase—no law—and by the tantalizing void of land and sky that flowed away from the garrison in every direction.

Night or day—sitting on the upper porch of the barrack by night and scanning the far reaches under the cool moon, or doing his recruit drill under the lashing tongue of Sergeant Gorply—Stoggins was seduced by his environment and by the dreams his unlimbered thought begun to concoct about such lawless things as rum-running, or smuggling orientals, or turning bandit chieftain and harassing the Texas border and a Mexican state or two.

Big country gave Stoggins big thoughts.

By the time the drill sergeant turned him for duty and a horse and equipment were assigned to him, his hunger was appeased and his plans were formed, such as they were.

Then opportunity came in connection with a prizefight between the "Cavalry Kid" and a Mexican from over the border called the "Wild Hombre," with Sergeant Gorply as referee. Such international bouts as this often caused trouble, and every soldier who could get away from the post was certain to go.

Stoggins' scorn for the tin sojers and his continual mocking of them with his little smirk had so antagonized every man in his troop that when the hour of the fight came and they straggled off in twos and threes and groups, not one asked him to go along. Not that he would have gone and delayed his plan, but it flicked him that nobody had called out in friendly fashion—

"Come on, Stog, ol' hoss, and join the gang."

Oh, well, it didn't matter; they were gone and that was what he wanted.

In the darkness he evaded the non-com. in charge of quarters and got his blanket, canteen, belt, and his pistol that he had withheld from the arms-rack and hid away in his locker in the course of the day, and slipped out the back way to the picket-line.

He approached the horses warily, to find the sentry and stable-guard off to one side listening to the distant cheering from the ringside. He saddled his horse without the smack of a strap and led him into the adjacent mesquite before mounting.

Then he rode around the mud village of Mariposa, with the ringside shouting swelling and receding in volume above the breeze, and on toward the river. A spirit of exultation rose in him at being quit of the Army and its rigid rules.

"No law!"

He told himself that this was freedom. He choked down a desire to whoop 'er up. He chuckled and chuckled at nothing. Past the town at last and in the maze of paths that led riverward through the brush, he pulled up to look back at the few scattered lights.

Abruptly he was tempted by the exultation in him to go back and see the rest of the fight. And also perhaps get in a punch at Gorply.

He rode back as far as he dared to risk the horse and tied his mount in the luxurious mesquite, left his pistol and belt on the saddle lest they give him away, and strode boldly to the big barn-like structure where fights and the like were held.

The door was unwatched. Stoggins entered. The crowd of Mexicans and American soldiers was up on the board seats howling and shrieking. The reason was plain in a minute—Referee Gorply was giving the Cavalry Kid the best of it. The Mexicans were protesting and the Yankees were trying to hoot them down.

A round was finished. The crowd quieted. Stoggins was feeling right. He stepped to the elevated platform with a smirk of delight on his hard little mouth.

"Hey, Gorp," he called hecklingly above the buzz of voices, "Why don't yuh give the Mex a fair shake?"

Hard-boiled Gorply whirled. The buzz hushed.

"Play fair, you, Gorp!" ordered Stoggins.

"Go to it, Stog!" some one shouted encouragingly. Then another, "Make 'im play fair, Stog!"

But for lack of volume this minority subsided. Gorply bent over the ropes and stuck an angry finger down at Stog.

"Don't butt in here!" he ripped. "Go find you a seat and sit down."

Stog smirked up with his mocking grin. From the first this had got under Gorply's skin. The very first evening that Stoggins was in the post the sergeant had ordered him to stand at attention when the colors were being lowered at retreat roll-call from the high, white flag-pole. Stoggins had obeyed readily enough, but his piggy eyes had twinkled and a smirk lurked around his mouth in utter amusement at such tweedle-de-dum. He had been that way toward every little meticulous military duty. His smirk belittled both the duties and the men who performed them sincerely. And now Stog was about to reap what he had sown.

"Go and sit down," repeated Gorply.

"Climb down from up there and make me sit down," suggested Stog.

But the sergeant thought too much of his chevrons to risk losing them by accepting the challenge of a private.

"Come on," urged Stog truculently. "You been proddin' me around at drill for two, three weeks now, or more. Come down and face the consequences."

Hisses came from the seats, and advice to give 'im the bum's rush. Stoggins was under no delusions. They meant him. It stung a little. He saw he had no time to lose. He suddenly reached under the ropes, caught Gorply's ankles and jerked his feet from under him, so that the sergeant sat down heavily on the edge of the platform.

Expecting Gorply to attack, Stog stepped back for a swing with his right, his thick, short body compact and ready. Gorply did slide off the platform with doubled fists, but at the same time two non-coms. seized Stoggins by the arms. They jerked him around with their unexpectedness, and Gorply joining behind, the three gave him the "bum's rush" to the door. As they shoved him over the threshold Gorply kicked him.

"Don't ye come back in here, ye bolshevik!" bellowed the sergeant.

Stog whirled, blood in his eye, but the gang inside had become a mob crowding for the door. They came spilling out. Nobody loved Stog. They were after him. He knew it. He went backing off into the darkness shouting epithets.

"Stay inside where you won't git hurt, you pet monkeys, you tin sojers, you saluters! You dishwashers and housemaids!"

If Stoggins had belittled the soldiers by his smirking, the small military duties had belittled him—saluting, standing at attention when an officer approached, saying "sir," picking up burnt matches and cigaret stubs at the morning police-up, standing at the mess-tables until the order to be seated.

"You convicts!" he flung in finality. "You—you law-steppers!"

And then he fled into the night.

BACK in the saddle Stog felt good. Felt free. He'd got his opinion of sojers off his chest. Had flung it in their faces and escaped their wrath. The south wind blowing over the mesquite tops was cooling. He sat enjoying it and listening to the renewed yelling at the ringside.

Then all at once the disturbance became a pæan of triumph. Without a doubt the Cavalry Kid had won. Stog heard the gabbling spectators coming out. He headed his horse for the river.

A dim light, a shack, appeared in the jungle. And new sounds. Somebody drawing water at a well. It reminded him that he had not filled his canteen, and that he was thirsty besides. He dismounted and spoke to the old woman visible at the curb.

She gave him permission to get water, which was better than from the river. Hearing talk, an old man came out, then a young woman and three or four children—the Gomez family. Stoggins had talked with them a few days before when meandering around picking up Mexican ways and words. As he loitered now, recalling his vocabulary and acquiring the Mexican equivalents for "south" and "road" and "town," the shouting arose again in the village, faint but clear, sounding like a hue and cry. Immediately a flare burned, of the sort the proprietor of the public hall frequently used to attract crowds.

Stog thought they might have discovered the absence of his horse and started a search. He loitered no longer but rode swiftly on his journey.

Once across the river Stog set a leisurely pace, straight south, enjoying the cool wind against his face, like a good traveler, maintaining a keen scrutiny of the land and the darkness. The moon came along to light the sandy floor of the vast basin across which he rode. Somewhere ahead in the distant mountains visible by day he expected to find a village and Mexicans.

Once his horse threw up his head and flung a wild neighing inquiry into the night. And a short time afterward Stog became startlingly aware of horsemen riding from behind and a little to one side of him. Pursuers? He stopped, blending with the shadow of a yucca plant, and watched.

In a minute or two he made out three riders pushing along. Their vague silhouettes against the moonlight were Mexican. Just what he wanted. When they came abreast a short way off he parted from the shadowy yucca and hailed.

"Hey, you jaspers!"

The calvacade jerked up in confusion, and sharp questions cracked across the space.

"Aw, cheese that lightning lingo," admonished Stog good-humoredly. "Talk white man."

"Who you?" came the quick English. "You better stop queek, meest'r."

Stog, close to them now, saw that they had their guns on him. He stopped.

"Who you? What you want, gringo?"

The voice was angry and suspicious. The

spokesman spurred a step or two nearer, gun outthrust, peering, looking as if he were on a hairtrigger ready to shoot. And Stog recognized him.

"Well I'll be hanged," he ejaculated, "if it ain't the Wild Hombre himself!"

He had seen the pugilist around the garrison town for the last two or three days.

"You!" exclaimed the Mexican. "You they call Stog? You that man?"

"Sure, I'm the guy that took your part with the referee."

"Baw, you quarrel your own—quarrel with that man."

"Told Gorp to play fair," insisted Stog, trying to make hay. "He was giving you the worst of it. I wanted to punch his mug."

"He got his mug punched all right, meest'r."

The three gave a jerky, significant laugh. Then the Wild Hombre reverted to his suspicious, puzzled inquiries.

"You are at the ringside in Mariposa two minutes before the fight ees feenish, why you here so queek? Who ees weeth you?"

Three pairs of eyes tried to penetrate the shadows of the desert for other men.

"Who you with?" insisted the questioner.

"Just my luck, ol' top."

"And one good horse!"

They had been glancing at his horse, which was an animal far superior to their bony racks. Their eyes continued to linger.

"Why you travel in our country tonight, gringo?" the Mexican pushed on belligerently. "Eh? What you here for? Why you come? Where you go?"

"Go over the hill."

"Desert?"

"Yeah."

But the Mexicans regarded him doubtfully, not satisfied. Stog had known the truth to serve him well in such cases of doubt. He tried facts now.

"Don't like the Army. Been thinking for some time about coming over here. No law." He gestured to include the universe. "Big country, empty as a gambler's house, man can do as he pleases. No law."

"No law?" The Wild Hombre's words were like an insect's antennae, feeling around. "Do as he please—An' what ees eet you please, Meest'r?"

"Well—" Stog flushed at revealing his inner self. "Thought maybe I'd get some good boys like you together and do some raiding and looting. This country looks fit for such." He gouged space again with his stocky arm. "No law."

The Mexicans spoke among themselves in their tongue, long accustomed to suppose that no man in the gringo soldier uniform could understand. Their tension let down. They regarded Stog's mount again. Stog caught the word *caballo*, knew it meant horse. The trio laughed in amusement. And after a little more talk the Wild Hombre addressed the American again—

"You ride weeth us to Loma Vista, Meest'r Stog?"

"Loma Vista?"

"That ees a town without no law, where we ride."

"Sure, I'll try anything once."

So they struck out, and Stog perceived that they were veering to the southeast, also that the riders were pushing their horses along at a hard gait and that they kept glancing back over their shoulders. Stog wondered why and went a-fishing.

"Well," he inquired blandly, "how'd the fight come out?"

"That referee, he no good. I lose the decision," answered the pugilist, and added, "but also I win."

The other Mexicans jerked out their significant laugh. It nettled Stog, put another query on his tongue.

"That flare—why'd they burn that after the fight was over?"

No answer to this, but after a long time the Wild Hombre threw back over his shoulder a question directly connected with it.

"That flare—where you, meest'r, when she burn?"

Contrary now, Stog would not answer.

On through the moonlight they rode. The farther they drew away from the border, the less they looked back over their shoulders and the more exultantly they talked, while the Wild Hombre boasted smugly. Stog could tell by the rise and fall of their language.

Stog was exultant too. He rode, a brother to the high skies and wide reaches, dreaming dreams, rehearsing his Mexican words, humming now and then some ballad about "workin' on the railroad," and reflecting pleasurably that he was riding away from teaming and cement mixing and Army fol-de-rol, and from the law that was always proddin' a guy in the ribs, even to throwing him in jail for helping the gang tear down a cookshack or so when the grub got too punk on the job.

But above all he was out in this promising emptiness where no law reigned. He desired to sing very loudly, and shout, but contented himself with spurring up to the Wild Hombre's side with a query.

"Hey, bo—"

"My name ees Mandos."

"Glad to meetcha. Say, bo, that town o' Bona Visty you're hittin' for, it's sure lawless, is it?"

"Loma Vista—ah, señor, so lawless that even good horses do not remain there for long."

"Haw-haw-haw!" roared Stog at the clever pun.

LOMA VISTA was a dozen makeshift adobe shacks on a high shelf of the foothills. It was scattered around a spring that seeped from under the toe of a hill, and it had a population of three dozen poverty-bitten men, women and children with the quarrelsome, savage keenness that empty stomachs gave—border scourings, vagabonds, half-bandits, goodlings and badlings with their weaknesses.

The four riders reached the high shelf at daybreak. As they watered and drank at the spring the frowsy-headed, unwashed people crawled out, eager for the news, bringing up with fierce and suspicious scowls at sight of Stoggins.

Mandos, the Wild Hombre, talked to them in their tongue, evidently telling of the fight. He produced a little bag of American silver, that must have been his share of the gate receipts, and gave out driblets as if paying debts. The men and women snatched the money with starveling hands, growling and arguing shrilly.

Then Mandos enacted a scene that had a startling effect on his hearers. He gestured and talked volubly. Stog caught the words *Americano* and Gorply and flare. Mandos ended by jerking out his knife and stabbing the air with it, whereupon three or four of the older ones protested bitterly while the others were fiercely exultant, turning on Stog angrily.

But Mandos checked the riot with further talk that brought the crowd to an interested hush. It sounded as if he were explaining, laying a scheme—framing a deal thought Stog, who stood alertly with his hand on his pistol. Humor began to hover on the hard faces, and when Mandos finished there was tickled laughter, and one of the men saluted Stog with great gravity and spoke two words—

"My captain!"

Every one howled with laughter. They looked at Stog and held their sides, all the while looking at Stog as if he were a comedy act.

It nettled Stog. He started to unsaddle. The Mexicans, drying their mirth, put him aside with courtesy, and attended to the matter, staking the horse out also.

The crude households busied themselves with breakfast. Some had corn cakes and some had beans, and that was all save goats' milk. But it's an ill wind that blows no good, thought Stog—such keen famine as was manifested would make keen looters under his leadership.

A pan of bread and beans was handed to him, at Mandos' order, by an old hag who bowed. The crowd tittered. It was mockery that Stoggins could not understand.

After he had eaten, Stog meandered out to the lip of the shelf on which the village sat, at the point where the trail climbed a steep acclivity to the level of the shelf. The world under the morning sun fell away in illimitable space—the same emptiness as on that first day, only now he looked from Mexico into the United States. He thrilled again at the meaning to him.

"No law!" he said aloud.

"You are right, meest'r."

Mandos had come up behind. A smirk was on his face, just such a smirk as Stoggins had worn at the thought of having the Army under his thumb.

"No law, meest'r, ain't eet the truth!"

Mandos flickered a hand contemptuously toward the dim mountain clumps of the northward.

"That U. S., she ees a weak sister."

"Where'd you get that stuff, guy? The U. S. is the strongest nation in the world."

"Baw, she has no law. She can not keep you in her Army. She will not come over here to catch you. The soldiers are afraid of Mexico, to follow and take you. She cannot take me, Mandos the Fighter. Ha-ha! I have beat her ver' many time."

"Oh you have, have you?" Stog changed the subject. "What is the joke the bunch here has got up their sleeve? They call me their captain and laugh."

"They laugh because there is no law."

"What's funny about that?"

"They are happy because with you here they will acquire."

"Acquire? Oh, I getcha! Raid, loot. I say we'll acquire!"

"And eat. Maybe I get some new shoes."

Mandos looked down at his ragged footwear.

"How come," asked Stog talkatively, "that you beat the U. S. so ver' much, as you say?"

"Hah, I do not regret to say. One time I smuggled—what you call, narcotics—by Laredo to San Anton. One time I get two immigrants through at Eagle Pass. Those U. S. Federals, how they look for me. But I give them the horse-laugh. I, Mandos the fighter, am not to be taken by the U. S."

"Oh, you ain't, ain'tcha?" said Stog, a little touched by heat under the collar.

Such egotism was too scratchy for him. He went striding back to the huts with a feeling that the Wild Hombre needed to be disciplined.

Stog found that the other two men who had ridden all night were turning in among some blankets in an open-sided shack for sleep. He reckoned he'd do so too and looked for his O. D. blanket that he had thrown on the ground when he removed it from the saddle. But the blanket was gone, and a hasty search did not uncover it.

"Hi," he called to Mandos at the spring, "some sticky-fingered guy's swiped my blanket. Can't you order 'em to come through?"

Mandos shrugged indifferently.

"Blanket thief ought to be jailed," mumbled Stog.

"No jail," said Mandos laconically. "No law."

Stog lay down sulkily in the shade of a house, his hat for a pillow, and dozed off to sleep with a feeling that the people sprawled about were laughing at his expense.

SHRILL chatter and cackling by the village women awakened Stog about mid-forenoon. They were gathered around two men on bony horses, with three led burros, evidently for pack purposes, offering small coins and pleas and advice and reminders—speeding the parting messengers, it appeared. Mandos explained that the two men were heading for "Cargin's mine back in the hills to do a little trading." And smirked.

Stog returned to his snoozing and slept until the noon sun burned him out. In order to stretch his legs and look around he bethought himself to find his horse. As he went off with that avowed intention, in the direction that he had seen it led away, he knew that the loafing Mexicans were watching him in amusement.

And when he rounded a little point of land, he found horses staked out, drooping in the sun with pendulous lips, but not his own bay. It was nowhere to be seen.

Stog hurried back to the huts. Mandos sat indolently with his back against the side of a shack.

"Say," Stog charged, "my horse is gone."

"I can not help it, Meest'r. It is without law here."

"You're some guy, you are!"

"Some guy—you spik the solemn truth."

"It's a shame you're wasting yourself here in this mud city."

"Ah, now you spik the sarcastic. Yet it is a shame. I am one great fighter. But in Monterey I hit too hard a scoffer at the ringside—the big-mouth son of the police chief. I am banished so I do not hit ever'body in Monterey and hurt them."

"I getcha," said Stog. "You're a flittin' mud-dauber between the United States and Mexico, without the nerve to stay long in either one."

"Hah, I am not afraid of the law of the U. S. Or its people."

"Is that so! Well say, don't get it under your bonnet that I'm no law, personal. This gang's going to dig up one bay Army horse and saddle or—" Stog stopped.

"Exactly, meest'r—or. You better find yourself under your hat or the sun will make you spik more careless things. No?"

Stog had left his hat where he had been sleeping. Something made him wonder. He looked. It was gone. And this time he knew that he was being laughed at by the loafing populace.

In the late afternoon, when a cool breeze had begun to whisk down from the hills, Stog climbed the slopes above the village to get away by himself to think, and to see whether with a wider view of the countryside he could locate his horse anywhere.

Stog was sore. Just let him get his horse and he would ride on to a more natural and friendly village. This Wild Hombre—Stog was resentful of his slurs toward the United States.

When he had climbed high enough to command a view of every nook and cranny in the region of the village, he was unable to see his horse, or any animals save some goats and a half-dozen bony horses grazing near the huts.

Stog sat in a shady spot for a long time chewing his wrath and scheming to make the Mexicans return his horse and saddle.

At about sunset he saw two horsemen with three pack burros approaching the village—without a doubt the two marketers who had left for Cargin's store in the forenoon. Stog was hungry. He got his stocky figure under way for the huts.

When he arrived the Mexicans had store foods scattered around in piles and were eating and having a hilarious time. At sight of Stoggins they began to shout eagerly, and Mandos came out from the scramble.

"Ah, Meest'r," he began suavely, while the crowd quieted expectantly, "you must eat some of your horse for supper."

"Horse for supper?"

"Yes, Meest'r. These naughty boys take your horse and saddle and turn them into the eats."

Stog was red-faced with fury, and helpless.

"You want no law," reminded Mandos. "We must oblige. You no ride your horse any more. You better eat." He suddenly offered a long, withered bologna sausage. "Here ees the neck for you."

Those behind him whose mouths were not too stuffed shrieked with delight, and some of them offered other things.

"Here is some of the saddle—" holding out a dried peach. "Here is an ear—" presenting a chocolate-cake.

Stog wanted to kill. But he was hungry too. So he only laughed grimly and, crowding into the litter of store things, helped himself. The ironic courtesy was kept up as long as they ate.

"You ask for no law," Mandos kept reminding. "We mus' please our guest."

After supper, when full stomachs made lazy tongues, and the people were lying about on the ground, the attention took a new turn. Blankets were spread on the floor in one of the open-sided huts and Stog was invited to "go to bed and get a good night's rest." He was suspicious and hung back, where upon they jostled him to the cot and compelled him to lie down. And they spread on more blankets until he was perspiring with the heat.

It was a lot of fun for the Mexicans. They seemed to see some joke in it beyond the horse-play. When they got away from him, Stog sat up pondering. The crowd shifted out of sight and gathered around a little fire singing softly to the thrum of a guitar.

Stog was weary and sleepy. They had given him a bed. He had no confidence in their generosity, didn't know what new trick they were up to, but why not make use of the blankets? He had not had his clothes off in two days and a night. He was sweaty and garment-bound. His gun belt had become a nuisance with its steady pull.

He succumbed to the temptation and undressed down to his underwear, making a bundle of the clothing for a pillow. He was asleep before he knew it.

And the awakening was abrupt.

He was being flung about. Men were around him jerking blankets off and from under him. When he got to his feet they were in a ring about him and they had his garments, shoes, gun and all.

Stog made a dive for the gun, in the hands of the Wild Hombre. He forgot that the man was a fist fighter. He was met by a blow in the face that sent him staggering out of the hut.

STOGGINS sat on the lip of the shelf in the white moonlight, regarding with bitter eye the vast space about him. Sometimes he shivered under the sharp wind sliding down from the hills, for his union-suit was his only garment. Now and then he cursed musingly—cursed the hunger that had made him enlist, cursed the Army, the Mexicans who had made him an object of sport, cursed the vast void that had been his inspiration, and cursed his warwhoop—"no law."

The nagging, chill wind kept him from sleep or from sitting still long. For the dozenth time he got up and went prowling. Surely morning and sunshine would be here before long. The shaley rock was hard on his bare soles, and at every other step he cringed. He limped among the houses, nosing like a hungry dog for a blanket, or a man's garments, or his shoes.

He thought of riding one of the rack-o'-bone horses to find the Cargin mine and try for a job, or maybe organize a party to help him find his horse and return here and teach the Wild Hombre a lesson.

The first faint hint of dawn lighted the east. Mandos came out of his shack to prowl around. He had been up twice in the night, like an uneasy sleeper. Stog kept track of him as he went peering here and there, followed him to the lip of the shelf where the road came up. Mandos seemed to try to penetrate the silent reaches below in the swift dawning, and giving up, turned back—to confront Stoggins.

"Ah, I wonder where you are, gringo. I theenk maybe you go home."

"Who, me? No danger, Mex."

Mandos laughed softly.

"You would be at a loss, eh, to return without your horse and saddle and gun? I feel ver' sorry for you."

"Aw, stow that stuff. You put 'em up to robbing me. Acquire! I'll say they've acquired!"

"You want no law, Meest'r."

"Cheese that."

Mandos chuckled smoothly again.

"For why you do not steal one of our horses and ride to another town?" he asked.

"You want to get rid of me?" growled Stog. " 'Fraid o' me?"

"No pants, ees that why you do not run away from us? Ha-ha-ha! Eet ees not pleasant to enter a strange town, eh, without no pants?"

"Hombre," blurted Stog, "you'll pay for this cackling you're doing."

"How?"

The smooth voice was insolent, taunting. "How you pay me, Meest'r? No law here."

He gestured around them, then flung out an arm toward the United States territory bulking mountainously northward in the growing light.

"No law there. Eh, how about it? They can not keep you in their Army. They can-not get Mandos the Fighter."

Sullenly Stog sat down on the edge of the shelf. He did not wish to talk. Mandos had the best of the argument.

Stog's sultry eye caught sight, far down the slopes, of two horsemen, or at least two moving black specks. When he craned around to see if the Mexican observed them he saw only Mandos returning to the huts.

The riders, as they presently proved to be, came from the northwest, probably a pair who preferred to travel in the cool night rather than the hot day. It did not cross Stog's thought that they might be soldiers after him. He had no expectation of being pursued as a deserter into Mexico. He forgot that they were coming, in chewing over his unclad and ignominious condition.

He was startled by the sudden scrambling of hoofs on the sharp little slope just before the horses debouched on to the shelf. He got to his feet. The horses came up on the level, panting. The horsemen reined in, staring at Stog slack-jawed.

"Well," Stog flared impatiently, "didn't you ever see a union-suit before?"

"Señor," answered one of the men, "we are surprized to see you. They have offered a reward of a thousand dollars in Mariposa for you."

"For me? What for?"

"For the murder of Sergeant Gorply."

THE ordinary border Mexican seldom will put a finger in the American legal machinery, such as informing officers as to a fugitive's whereabouts, even when a reward is offered, for fear of getting into trouble himself. Stog remembered this, and his first jumping thought that the men might try to turn him in to collect the reward was somewhat quelled. After further puzzled regard of Stoggins in his scanty attire the riders turned away toward the huts, calling out like men glad to get home again.

Stog hobbled along after them, explanations tumbling over one another in his mind. The Wild Hombre had killed Gorply! That accounted for the Mexican's alarm the night before when Stog had loomed up out of the darkness, accounted for the hurry and for their looking back over their shoulders, and for their exultation as they drew farther away from the border without being pursued by soldiers.

At the calling of the two riders there was the same pell-mell rush of frowzy-heads from the huts as on the previous morning.

A hush hung heavy as the new-comers talked. Faces took on droll, amused looks. Stog felt a premonition. He was going to be laughed at again. Was there ever such a laughing gang as this? It was only Mandos though who was audibly amused. He was triumphant. One of the new arrivals offered an explanation.

"Mandos," he said, "kill that Gorply."

"You bet!" Mandos gritted with a touch of defiance, drawing out his ever-ready knife. "He do me dirt. I hide in the brush after the fight and knife him twice when he come along. Pancho and Bonito are with me and see. The soldiers see him fall. They run up, bend over, feel hot blood. They are scared. Like chickens with their heads chopped they dance around. They shout for a light. The Yankee soldiers are afraid!"

The man stopped to leer at Stog, waited for a reply, but when Stog held silent he went on.

"Those soldiers, they call back and forth that Stog have knifed Gorply. Another joke on you, eh? The theater man come out and light a flare. I escape queek. We ride away. I am ver' surprized, Meest'r, when I meet you on this side of the river las' night. I know you have not stab Gorply. I wonder why you have run away."

Stog stared. Here was a man boasting of murder. And trying to taunt Stog. For the first time the stocky, hard-knuckled American could remember he was without anger under such circumstances. His leer and contempt were gone. He was calm. In a moment his outlook on life was altering.

The Wild Hombre began to crow with the exuberance that comes with the lifting of fear. That a reward had been offered for Stog lifted suspicion from him.

"Ha-ha, I am beat the U. S. one more time," he ran on. "Now I go back again. They always get their wires crossed. They have no power. I am free. You are free. The U. S. have no strong law. How you like that, meest'r? No law."

Stog did not like it. He had been growing sick of the two words. Now he was nauseated by the derisive, triumphant phrase on the lips of the murderer.

All at once his presence here, his freedom on this side of the Rio Grande, seemed to make him an accomplice of the Mexican in mocking the United States. And immediately a determination came to him.

He did not say what it was. He turned away from Mandos with a shrug in unwitting imitation of the Mexicans and asked—

"When do we eat?"

Stog spent most of the forenoon stretched out in a smooth niche of the rimrock getting the sleep that he had missed the two previous nights. When he awakened his thought was clear. He had been robbed, made the butt of a great joke in the Mexican way. But a determination had come to him. And now he lay blinking for a while, letting details of a scheme arrange themselves in his mind.

At last heat and thirst drove him away from the rocks. At sight of him hobbling bare-foot over the rocky ground, the villagers turned their attention to him. Mandos imitated Stog's hobble and received such encouragement from the rest of the idle Mexicans that he tried something else. He donned Stog's Army hat, snatched from some one's else head; seized Stog's olive drab uniform coat from the doorway of a hut and rammed his arms through the sleeves with the buttons at his back; and shouldering a stick like a gun, began a stiff, grotesque imitation of a soldier drilling, that set the simple people to tittering and giggling.

Stoggins came up close and looked on soberly as an owl. There was no smirk on his face, no anger, and the little twinkling piggishness of his eyes had given away to a calmness that somehow was a threat. It dampened the fun. Grins sobered. Mandos was squelched. He flung the coat off and kicked it aside as he breasted up to Stog.

"You up to some trick," he charged angrily.

Stog, with the new clarity of vision that was coming to him, read Mandos instantly. The fellow was at heart uneasy over the killing he had done, and he didn't understand the change in Stog to quiet and calm, didn't really comprehend Stog's presence on the Mexican side, and because of these things was apprehensive. The man proved this to Stog's satisfaction by his next words.

"Eet ees time for you to go, meest'r. Which way you start?"

Mandos gestured north and he gestured south. He wanted action, wanted to be rid of the American before the American could accomplish whatever his changed demeanor indicated, wanted to see which way he went so that he could arrange his own whereabouts accordingly. Summed up, Mandos was afraid because he didn't know exactly where he stood.

"You no spik?" he demanded.

"I stay here," rumbled Stog at last.

"You no eat!" Mandos flung something in Mexican to the silent people around him, then back to Stog, "You no get more grub."

Stog shrugged and went on to the spring for a drink.

After this Mandos was moody, sometimes gay and sometimes sullen, but always watchful. Nobody risked offending him by giving Stog food at noon. But little food was eaten by any one. The fripperies of the feast of the evening before, from the proceeds of the sale of the Army horse, were gone. The old women had by now got hold of the staple things and put them away. The next meal would be at dark.

But in the course of the siesta hours Stog received a surprize. He heard an old woman and an old man who was the hardest-looking cutthroat in the village whispering together in the hut at his back. Then there was a hissing and he saw himself being signaled and *szzzted* to silence. He went gingerly, not knowing what to expect. And with kindly smiles and cautions for silence the old pair gave him a plate of beans and several inches of bologna.

"The last joint of the neck of your *caballo*," the man said with a grin.

"Thanks," muttered Stog with a sudden lump in his throat, touched as he had not been in years.

It was the last food that he had, for he got nothing at supper time.

Through the late afternoon and evening and early night Stog stalked about lonesomely in his one garment, and at the same time watchfully—a sort of insignificant and incomprehensible figure in the Mexicans' eyes. He had in mind to accomplish two things by this, to get everybody except Mandos used to him so that they would forget his presence, and to keep the murderer suspicious and alert.

A quiet village in the night and an uneasy Mandos were the keys to his scheme. If they failed—well, he'd not plan that side of it till he had to.

AS ON the previous night, the people gathered around a little fire after supper to sing and talk. When they broke up and the men, women and children piled down on the dirt floors in their clothes, Stog quit his solitary flitting and settled down also against an adobe wall out of the wind, waiting for everything to become quiet.

When he thought that every one might be asleep he was up and prowling again. He had entertained a hope of getting some clothes, a pair of shoes—Mandos had his Army shoes—and he had two or three guns located. But he soon saw with his peeping in at the dark doors at the recumbent figures that he dare not risk trying to step over these outdoor, cat-keen sleepers to obtain the guns he had seen hanging on the back walls. They had laughed themselves into believing him harmless, but once let them suspect that he was trying to arm himself and no telling what they might do.

He surrendered the idea of a gun and turned in his mind to the next best thing. And he knotted about his waist for later use a bit of rope that he had kept an eye on all afternoon.

When the stillness of sleep was upon the village, he saw Mandos peep from a doorway. Stog exulted. The Mexican was on watch! Catching sight of Stog he drew back.

After that Stoggins prowled back and forth where Mandos could see him without coming to the door—prowled as if he were stalking Mandos, kept it up for a long time, pretending to hide in the shadows of a shack across the way; coming out, when the moon rose, into the brighter light, hiding again, imitating a prowler who could not quite make up his mind to attack. All the while he hoped that Mandos was sitting back in the blackness of his hut watching, uneasy, perhaps ready with knife or gun.

And when at last he felt that he had raised Mandos' curiosity and uneasiness to a high pitch, he took himself out of sight.

This phase of his scheme had been suggested to Stog by Mandos' restless watching through the afternoon. He had an idea that the Mexican would follow him.

Other details had come to him one by one, and he went now to the spring to carry out another one of them. He dashed water over himself from head to foot. It was cutting in the brisk wind. Then he lay down in the dust and blackened himself to dull the whiteness of his skin and underwear.

A moment later he was among the rocks and bunch grass at the brink of the shelf. Just below was the smooth place where he had slept through the forenoon. He concealed himself and waited.

In a few minutes Mandos came along uneasily, one step at a time, looking back toward the shacks, peering ahead. Suddenly he went back and made a suspicious circuit of the huts, then he came back again stealthily toward the brink.

Only Stog's eyes were above the edge, screened by the fringe of grass. He could hear Mandos' unlaced shoes—his own shoes—clumping lightly. The man was only half-clad. He carried a pistol in his right hand, probably Stog's, since he had kept the Army gun.

Mandos looked to be a hunting, murderous figure. Throughout the evening he had eyed Stoggins with blacker and blacker doubts. Stog had got the idea that the man would shoot or knife him at the drop of a hat. Now, as Mandos drew nearer, Stog carefully made his way down into the shadows among the boulders that had at some ancient day dropped from the rim. He squatted, his muddied body and garment blending with the night blackness. His right hand felt for and found a shapely stone he had placed there in the afternoon.

Mandos came to the brink, peering down at the shelf where he had seen Stog asleep. He was plain in the moonlight. As soon as he saw that the familiar form in white underwear was not there he drew back.

Stog straightened up cautiously, expecting to see Mandos across the grass fringe returning to the huts, but instead he saw him at the head of the steep incline where the horses came up on the shelf, in a listening attitude, hand to ear.

It was Stog's chance, a slim chance, for Mandos might turn any instant, but Stog accepted it. A better one might never come.

In three long, swift and lifting strides, without soles to clump or garments to rustle, he was up on the level. In three more he was near enough to sling his stone.

Though Stog had been reckless and contemptuous, he had never been a man to strike another from behind. And he was suddenly reluctant to throw the rock and knock Mandos out treacherously.

He did not throw it. He dropped it and, leaping the few steps, sprang against Mandos just as the Mexican turned, his right hand reaching for Mandos' dangling pistol.

He knocked the Mexican down the slope. Both went down headlong together, and together they rolled along the steep, struggling for the pistol, Stog gripping it by its middle and trying to wrench it from Mandos' clasp.

Mandos was the larger man by six inches and forty pounds, but he was a boxer while Stog was built more like a compact wrestler. In the brief rolling struggle Stog came out on top in a moment, with his knee in Mandos' stomach. A wrench with both hands made the gun his. He scrambled back from the Mexican.

"Keep away!" he barked. "I'll shoot to kill!"

Mandos checked his forward movement, upright on his knees.

"If you holler and bring somebody I'll shoot you first," warned Stog. "You killer! Take off my shoes and throw them to me. Take 'em off!"

Mandos sullenly drew off the unlaced shoes and tossed them to Stog, who put them on, tying the strings with jerks of satisfaction.

This left Mandos with only breeches and underclothes. Stog took from his waist the light rope he had knotted there for the purpose and tied his prisoner's hands behind him. Then he gave his orders.

"Listen, Mex, you and me are going to take a hike, savvy? You hit out northeast and don't stop till we whistle for Mariposa, see?"

"But, meest'r," protested Mandos hours later, as he walked along the sandy floor of the great basin in the white moonlight, six steps ahead of his captor, "they have offer a reward for you. They will hang you eef you go back, or shoot you by the wall."

"You've already told me that six times tonight," retorted Stog.

"Thees rock and thorns, they hurt my feet."

"Say! You never had a pair of shoes on till you was growed up. You got hoofs like a mule."

"You are deserter. They send you to prison."

"You've told me that too. All this repeatin' ain't going to get you nowhere. That stuff ain't going to scare me."

"You go back, meest'r, without no horse, or saddle, or canteen, or uniform they will—"

"Shut up. If you got to talk, talk something new."

Mandos said nothing for a mile or two, but when he spoke again he did bring out something new.

"When you come over here, meest'r, you say 'no law.' You stick out your breast like you do beeg things, beeg looting. But now—ha-ha!—eet ees to laugh. You are like a wilted weed. You are afraid, meest'r, of no law.”

Stog did not answer. He was not certain. He had been thinking confusedly about the no law idea—a man of instincts and impulses beginning really to think.

There was plenty of law, he saw, even in this empty space, though he was surprized and a bit incredulous at his discovery—such as the law of right and wrong, the law of the fugitive's fear, of empty stomachs, and loneliness, the law of the love of life, and of kind hearts in an old man and woman who had given him beans and sausage; the law of the love of country, and of vengeance—a hundred and one laws, it seemed, that he had never thought of when the emptiness first whispered “no law” to his lawless instincts.

For the life of him he could not tell which law was predominant in his taking Mandos back to justice. Maybe the law of vengeance. He did not know.

The only reason Stog could nail down—as he tramped along in his single garment and shoes, the heavy pistol dangling from first one hand then the other—was that he was going to show this Mex that there was such a thing as law on the American side. He desired to do that above all things, make the Mex know that there was law. And he was going to do it even if the Army sent him to prison for desertion and horse theft.

It was the end of the week. The six troops of the garrison were lined up on the parade ground for Saturday forenoon inspection, and the major commanding had just ridden up, when there appeared from out of the mesquite near-by two eye-catching figures—a Mexican bareheaded and barefooted, his hands tied behind him, and a white man following, also bareheaded, and in his underclothes, with a gun dangling from his hand.

AFTER a moment of staring the major and three or four captains went galloping to meet the pair.

“Why,” exclaimed one of the captains as they brought up before the two, “it's my man Stoggins, the deserter!”

“I've brought Mandos, the Wild Hombre,” said Stog. “The guy that killed Gorply—if Gorply's killed.”

“He's killed all right,” declared the major, looking down at Stoggins. “We thought it was you—reward and so on, called off last night when the Gomez family swore you were there filling your canteen when a flare burned—got witnesses against this Mexican too, seen fleeing and so on. He's the same as convicted now. But you—why'd *you* bring him in?”

“I dunno.”

“Where's your horse, your saddle, your clothes?”

“Mexes took 'em.”

“Ummm, a peculiar situation. Captain, call a corporal and a private from your troop and have them take these two men to the guard-house. We'll investigate later. Stoggins, give me that pistol.”

It was still a peculiar situation to the major and Stog's captain after they had talked a long time with Stog at the guard-house. They withdrew finally out of earshot and conferred, then returned with their puzzled frowns.

“We can't quite get why you came back,” began the major, “the exact motive.”

“Think you're telling the truth when you say you don't know,” declared the captain, half put out by Stog's seeming stupidity.

Stog had purposely kept a tight bridle on his tongue—no use to tell everything to these officers, all about no law, and the bandit chieftain stuff, and how the Mexicans gave him the horse-laugh as they stole his possessions.

“It is evident,” the major went on, “that you intended to desert when you left here three nights ago. You say so yourself. But it is just as evident that a profound change has come over you. Besides that, you have brought back a murderer to answer to our law. Under such circumstances we are inclined to leniency. Suppose we forget about desertion and take you into the ranks again—you'd have to make good that horse and saddle out of your pay.”

“I'd expect to.”

“Suppose we let you go back to soldiering without a court martial, would you stay your time out and try to be a worthy soldier?”

“Would you quit that smirk of yours?” interrupted the captain. “Would you quit calling soldiers convicts and housemaids?”

Stoggins turned to the window thoughtfully, stared out at nothing. He wished to be wholly fair and honest.

“I don't like soldier ways,” he said at last, facing them as man to man. “Though soldiers are all right, better men than I am, I reckon, in some ways.”

He spoke slowly. The two officers hung on his words. He had been an enigma. They hoped the affair would close nicely.

"I don't like your Army," Stog repeated. "I'd about as leave do three years in the pen. But I got mixed up with a lot of fool thinkin' about laws—an' I reckon I'll take my medicine—that is, I'll accept your offer and soldier it out. And much obliged."

"All right!" snapped the major with relief. "Report to your troop for duty and get cleaned up."

Stog saluted soberly.

Outside the guard-house he stopped to look at the vast emptiness extending from his toes in every direction, to distant mountains, and gray horizons in Mexico, and upward into the blue wastes of the sky.

"No law!" he whispered, shaking his fist at space. "Liar! Liar!"

PIONEER INGENUITY

by Arthur Woodward

WHEN Gen. John C. Fremont, then Brevet Capt. Topographical Engineer of the United States Army, conducted his first exploring expedition into the Rocky Mountains in 1842 for the purpose of reporting "Upon the country between the frontiers of Missouri and the South Pass in the Rocky Mountains on the line of the Kansas and Great Platte rivers," many interesting events took place of which I shall narrate but one.

The following incident taken from Captain Fremont's report of the exploration serves to illustrate the ingenuity with which the early explorers and pioneers met and overcame disheartening obstacles:

On August 10th, 1842, while crossing a small river *en route* to Mountain Lake, located in the Wind River Mountains in what is now northwestern Wyoming, Fremont broke the glass cistern of the only barometer carried by the expedition.

The breakage of the instrument caused deep gloom among the members of the entire party, especially among the mountain men who accompanied Fremont as they had depended upon the accuracy of the instrument to settle various bets concerning the altitude of some of the highest peaks in the Wind River chain which had been a matter of guesswork with the trappers and traders of the region.

Captain Fremont was greatly perturbed over the incident but resolved to seek some remedy for the broken tube. As luck would have it, he had several thick glass vials in his luggage and, when camp was made on the north shore of the Mountain Lake, he immediately set to work filing the vials to the necessary length. One after another the bottles broke until the supply was exhausted. Night having fallen, Fremont ordered a groove cut in one of the large trees near camp and in this notch he placed the barometer, right side up, to prevent further accident to it, and went to bed resolving that he would find some way to fix it the next day.

Early the following morning he began his task anew, racking his brains for a solution to the problem, for, unless he could mend the broken instrument, his journey, or at least the greater portion of it, would be useless.

Wandering about camp, his eyes fell on a powder horn carried by one of the Canadian voyageurs. The horn was remarkably clear, almost transparent, and when Fremont saw it he knew his search was ended. Taking the horn, he split it and boiled it until the horn was pliable, then he moulded it on a stick of the size of the glass tube on the barometer and stretched it to the requisite diameter, having first scraped the material to make it more transparent. He then fastened the horn to the glass with glue made from the back sinew of a buffalo, after which he added a pocket of buckskin, secured it in place with thread and more glue, heated the mercury to the right temperature and filled the tube after which he set it aside to dry.

A few hours later he tested the instrument and found it in perfect working condition much to the joy of the camp. With the instrument repaired, he set to work to determine the height of the neighboring peaks. It was with this barometer Fremont Peak, 13,570 feet above the Gulf of Mexico, was measured.

St. Gabriel Zsbyski

A Complete Novelette

by William Byron Mowery

Author of "Hard Lines," "The Bering Wolf," etc.

THE roaring Saskatchewan blizzard slammed open the door of the Mounted barracks and blew in six feet of sandy-whiskered, ice-sheathed corporal. While he fumbled for the knob he drew a hand from his bear-skin glove and clawed at the sleet in his eyelashes.

"Shut the doo-or, Zy!" bade Constable Coffey from his perch on top a double-decker bunk. It was considerably warmer up there.

"—the do-oo-or, Zy!" chorused three other constables and Sergeant Pedneault, who were playing euchre behind the red-hot stove.

The six men were all that Inspector Nuttall had left to him under his immediate charge. With the depleted detachment he had to police a section of prairie and park country as big as a small state; he had to take care of the immigrants filtering in; he had to send monthly patrols north and east to look after the strongwoods Crees of his territory, and once a season to visit the dozens of Indian lakes in the head-waters of the Churchill and Dubawnt. The needs of the Klondike rush, then in its full swing, had drawn heavily upon the whole police force.

"Go to —— and warm up, if you're all that cold!" Corporal Zsbyski rapped, in a voice that resembled a loon imitating a buffalo cough. "How d'you expect me to get in—down the chimley, like Santy Claus? Or did you expect me to stay out in the stable?"

His jacket crackled as he pulled it off. It stood a minute grotesquely stiff in front of the stove before it began to wilt.

"You should've come in off patrol when she struck, Zy," said Sergeant Pedneault. "The rest of us came in at ten o'clock. She's dangerous, what I mean. She's the kind that kills off game wholesale. A fellow hasn't any business out in this. Nuttall says nobody goes out till she stops. When the weather holds off till nearly Christmas, the first one is always the worst one, they say. But even so, this beats any blizzard I ever saw. She's so cold you can spit icicles."

"The truth, now!" Constable Hightower put in. "I never saw so warm a fall. But smoke o' smokes, it ended abrupt. Nice and balmy this morning at eight, then a little rain, a little sleet, then—stop kicking me, Breden; I know what to lead—then *bang!* she whooped over the hills and dropped the tempeechur three hundred degrees below freezo before I could button up my jacket."

"Correct about that, son," said Constable Morrow, the sergeant's partner. "I was ankling it across Muskeg Bottoms where she got a clean swat at me. She'd hit me one way and knock me over, then hit me the other and knock me back. I'd be leaning aginst her, when she'd stop all sudden and I'd fall down. Finally I turned my prow in this direction, held out my coat-tails for a sail, and hit ground three times between the Bottoms and here. If she's all this cold with a breeze blowing, I say, what'll she be when the breeze lays?"

"Zy's coat there 'minds me," said Breden. "My jacket got wet this morning in that sleety rain, so I took it off and carried it on the saddle. That first howl struck so quick and hard the coat froze solid as a bone before I could get in on."

"I believe that," Coffey affirmed, "spite of your telling it, Brede. The inspector sent me over to Beaver Lake this morning on one of these much-obliged jobs for Reverend Sour-Face Duncan. The whitefish were cutting didoes something fierce; you know how they jump up during rain or sleet, to see what's coming next. One big boy, he must've weighed twenty pounds, flipped out, turned a somersault, and started under again. Just then that first blast roared across the water and laid down skating ice. That big boy didn't quite make it back. If you don't believe me, you can mosey over there and see his tail and hindquarters sticking out of the ice yet."

"All lies not counted," Corporal Zsbyski remarked, pulling off his wet boots and clothing in anticipation of bunk patrol that afternoon, "she's a —— dangerous blow to be out in. I wonder what's happened with that bunch of spirit-wrestlers[*] that was wandering around our district looking for the promised land."

"Hobble that, Corp," Constable Coffey objected with some heat. "You've got no call to scoff at them Doukhobors. Their belief may be queer, but they're dead earnest about it. That's nothing to be laughed at."

"Well then," Zsbyski came back, "God pity the poor sailors on the sea tonight. D'you object to that, Coffey?"

"I swear, Zy," said Sergeant Pedneault, "you're the limit. When Gabriel blows his horn, you'll cuss him for waking you up. You'd better mend your wicked ways before Reverend Duncan gives it to you in the neck. He's complained about you to headquarters already."

Zsbyski flushed red.

"You know what I think about Duncan—"

"I do, Corp," Pedneault interrupted. "And leaving out the jaw-breakers, it's about what I think, too. But that don't alter the fact that he's riding you and'll put the greased skids under you if you don't watch your step.

"We kept some provender warm for you. Better hurry up and tie into it. Soon as Morrow and me skins this pair of cheaters, I want to pound your jaw a few rounds."

IN THE boarded-off mess corner of the quarters, Zsbyski swallowed several sweet potatoes candied with maple syrup, a chunk of moose jerky, bread with blueberry jam, and a mug of coffee. As he cocked his chair back and drank a second mug, he swore softly to himself at the thought of how Duncan had been riding him.

The Reverend George M. Duncan was an independent missionary[*] at Lac Outarde Settlement of Crees and *metis*—French halfbreeds. His predecessor, the Reverend Mr. Ewing, had broken down under his severe labors a year before and had been compelled to ask for a substitute. Duncan was in no danger of breaking from overwork. He wore out no horses in summer nor dog-teams in winter visiting his extensive parish. He was a thin-haired, dyspeptic man of thirty. The Indians called him Sour-Face; the *metis* called him a variety of things.

For several months there had been hostility between him and Corporal Zsbyski. It came out of a trivial incident. At the midsummer tribal dance-gathering, Duncan had promised a woolen blanket and barlow knife to every Indian who would profess himself a good Christian. The result resembled a pot-latch meeting. The missionary was able to send home a glowing, self-congratulating report of his labors, which report naturally tended to cast reflections upon the previous work of the Reverend Mr. Ewing and to strengthen Duncan's hold upon his temporary position.

In his characteristic blunt fashion Corporal Zsbyski had dropped a doubting remark about the motive of the Crees and about the genuineness of the wholesale conversions. The remark came to Duncan's ears and aroused his hot wrath. In behalf of his corporal, Inspector Nuttall apologized to end the incident. But the missionary's wrath was not so easily appeased. He bided his time, and sent a strong complaint to police headquarters about the corporal's profanity and irreligion.

---

[*] *Doukhobors* or more properly *Duchoboritsi* means spirit-wrestlers—i. e. in the Biblical sense, those who strive with the spirit.

[*] i. e. a missionary sent out by an individual church or by a group of people privately interested and usually very wealthy.

There was just enough fact basis in the complaint to make it dangerous. In outward token Corporal Zsbyski was a rough-speaking, scoffing, tousle-headed reprobate. There was no sanctimony in his make-up. He had no time for the orotund sermons of Reverend Duncan. He had no time for rituals of any sort, for psalm-singing, or for creeds generally. He shied off from all contact with them; they rubbed him the wrong way.

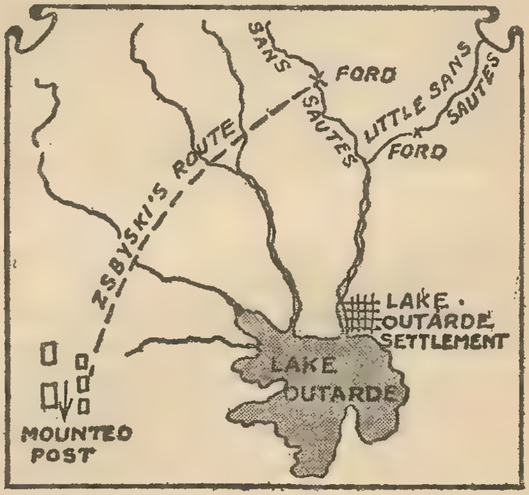
The reason why Zsbyski was such a hard-headed sinner lay in his having knocked about in a dozen different countries at a dozen different raw occupations. And this knocking about was the reason, also, for his unchallenged ability, when occasion called it forth, to cuss the indigo-bluest streak ever heard west of Winnipeg. Born thirty-three years before on an immigrant ship coming from White Russia to the Dominion, he spoke three European tongues besides English and French. This fluency in five languages naturally lent color, punch and endurance to his powers. His first fifteen years had been spent in the sugar-bush and at lobster-fishing on the Blue-Nose coast. That helped considerably. On a cod floater he had gone down to the Labrador three seasons, under a Gaspé skipper who could poison the air around him and make a charging grampus back-water. That helped, too. He had mule-logged on the upper Saguenay; had stoked on a limey freighter; and, to round out his ability to polished perfection, he had done three years as a cavalry trooper in Montana.

SUCKING a quill tooth-pick, Zsbyski strode out to the stove again and watched the euchre game. It was a neck-and-neck finish. A few moments later Breden attempted to get Hightower's attention and pass him the right bower under the table. Pretending to scratch his shin, Sergeant Pedneault intercepted the pass. Breden half-choked as the sergeant solemnly plumped the bower down on the board, captured the crucial trick and won the game.

Constable Coffey had cleared a space and chalked a ring on the floor. Pedneault brought out his set of gloves and gave a pair to Zsbyski.

For three seasons straight the sergeant had been boxing "champeen" of the Saskatchewan division; and in the last contests at Regina he had easily won the coveted Service laurels. His most serious opposition was right at home, in the hefty person of Zsbyski. The corporal had picked up a deal of after-deck sparring skill, and his straight right was a mule-kick when it landed flush. In a bare-knuckle fight his equal was few and far between. But in boxing something was wrong with him. The sergeant, who regularly out-stepped, out-boxed and out-hit him, tried hard to discover what was wrong. It seemed to him that the corporal had capabilities which he never developed.

Pedneault tried unselfishly to develop them. The Service laurels were a cherished prize to the sergeant; but still he was willing that Zsbyski should go down to Regina in his stead if the corporal were the better man; for he and Zsbyski had patroled together two years, had traded wallops with each other in barrack practise, had singed their whiskers fighting the same prairie and strong-woods fires, and had stood leg-to-leg in several knock-down fights with the turbulent *metis* at the Settlement.



The practise that afternoon was the same story. Pedneault punched Zsbyski all over the ring. As Breden called time for the fourth round to start, the sergeant got up slowly, scratching his head with his gloved thumb.

"I think I've puzzled out what's wrong with you, Zy. You're the kind of a boxer who's got to be cool as a cucumber or else madder'n a silver-tip rampant. But you keep just betwixt. When we first start you handle me easy; but soon as I lay on a couple and jar your temper a little, you lose all the skill you own and become just an ordinary good slugger. Of course I don't want you to get bull-mad fighting me, but you can try to keep cool. It's either that or see red—one or the other, Corp—"

He was interrupted by the door's slamming open again and Inspector Nuttall entering.

"I'm glad to see you are in, corporal," said the inspector, plainly relieved. "When you didn't show up at ten o'clock with the other men, I began to worry about you."

"I was delayed over at Loon Waddle Portage, sir," Zsbyski explained simply. "I had to straighten up Johnny Bad-Man's household. He was dead soaked again."

The corporal did not give the details of "straightening up the household," which were: Thrashing Johnny Bad-Man sober, helping the squaw put up a tin heating stove, running a cow, a horse and a goat into the wolf pen, and making a jump-rabbit for the runty little boy.

Nuttall's eye traveled from the chalked ring and gloves to the cards scattered on the table. He motioned to his two non-coms and they followed him aside.

"It's no affair of mine how you men spend your off-duty time. You've little enough of it anyway, goodness knows. I'm not objecting personally to your boxing or having a sociable game of cards on Sunday; but it would sound bad in a complaint. We'd better avoid trouble if possible; it might go serious for us. As it is, corporal, I've received a very strong-worded query about you from headquarters. I'm stumped to know what to reply."

For the third time the door slammed open. A squat, middle-aged Cree who was doing thirty days about the Post for playing carcajou to another man's trap-line came in.

"Devil box jingle-jingle," he informed Nuttall.

The inspector turned up his coat collar and hurried out to his cabin. When he came back the six men were sitting about the stove, thumbs in vest-holes, grumbling.

Nuttall's face was long and a worried look stood in his eyes. The men straightened up on their chairs, knowing something had gone badly wrong.

"The H. B. man at Lac Outarde Settlement just called me over the police line," he said tersely. "He reports that those two hundred Doukhobors are caught in this blizzard eleven miles northeast of here and seven north of the Settlement At Rivière Sans Sautes Ford. They have no tents, no winter clothes, and no gumption about weather like this."

"——'s blue blazes!" Zsbyski spluttered. The other men were silent, in the silence of consternation.

"They can't last many hours in this blizzard," Nuttall spoke again. "There's some women and children. About the only hope is to get them back to shelter at Lac Outarde. I don't know if it's humanly possible or not to get through to them. Frankly, I'd say the chances are against it. I can't *order* any man of you to try it when the risk of getting lost and freezing to death or of running into a wolf pack is so heavy. But—"

It was a call for a volunteer.

There was stark silence, save for the blizzard roaring down from the Barren Ground wastes and screaming over the quadrangle of buildings. The heavy breathing of the men was audible. They looked at each other, wide-eyed, their jaws dropping. Several times one or another shuffled his feet and wetted his lips to speak. But the ominous screaming outside was a warning to wither courage. No one spoke.

Corporal Zsbyski broke the taut silence. His tilted chair came down with a crash.

"By ——, I'll go. I'd hate to think of them poor devils freezing to death and me hugging a stove or stewing in bed. I can talk to 'em—"

"I'll go with you, Zsbyski," Sergeant Pedneault said quietly.

"I don't want you, —— it!" the corporal answered. "We'd be hunting for each other half the time. It's easier for one man to have his own head and bust through. One man'll do as much good as a dozen. I'm the man, I guess; because I can talk to 'em. I'd rather go alone."

The constables drew long breaths. Nuttall's manner quickened into bruskness.

"He's right, sergeant. You'll be needed here at quarters anyway. Corporal, get on your clothes and come to my cabin. Immediately. We've got only a few hours of light at the most."

Zsbyski dressed quickly in clothes that were warm but not bundlesome. He selected a pair of broad racquets for the new snow and broke across the quadrangle to Nuttall's cabin.

The inspector, fully dressed, was examining his racquet strings while he waited for Zsbyski.

"What in ——, sir?" the corporal blurted out.

"I'm going. I wouldn't ask for volunteers on a job I was afraid to tackle."

Whenever Corporal Zsbyski balked, nothing short of a boulder avalanche could budge him. He balked now. He knew that one man stood as good and probably a better chance of getting through than two men would stand. He knew very well that if he couldn't get through, Nuttall certainly could not, either. He knew that, whatever happened, he would not need the inspector's help. So he balked, flat-footed.

"I don't give a whisky —— if you are big auger!" he snorted, when Nuttall inquired just who was Post commander anyway.

"Horse sense is horse sense."

The argument reached the point where Nuttall had to give in to his non-com. or else go alone. Zsbyski saved him the job of deciding by catching up his racquets and starting for the door.

"Corporal! Just a moment. Perhaps you'll listen to a word of advice." Nuttall stopped him, while he carefully wiped the oil off his belt-gun and loaded it. "Clean the oil off your gun. This blow will bring the packs down but they won't be hungry or very dangerous yet a while. Take my gun extra and a belt-ax. My gelding is already saddled in the stable. He can't last long, but that doesn't matter. He may carry you several miles and that will help.

"If you get through to the Doukhobors, you want to lead them down Sans Sautes valley to the Settlement. The valley is deep and a complete wind-break, and the frozen stream will make good level going. Now a word about these Doukhobors. They are under the leadership of a big burly fellow who calls himself St. John the Apostle. He has led them into all sorts of misery, wandering about looking for he doesn't know what. They believe and obey him implicitly. He's a fanatic and may cause you trouble if you don't handle him easy."

"I'll handle him," Zsbyski promised. "But I've got to be starting."

"Corporal!"

Nuttall laid a hand on the door-knob. His strait-laced manner dropped from him; he swallowed hard and held out his hand slowly, reluctantly.

"Corporal, I'm hoping to heaven you—"

"Oh, choke it!" Zsbyski growled and flung out into the storm.

II

AS HE fought his way across the open quadrangle to the stable, Zsbyski was appalled at the blizzard's intensity. He had known fully what he had bargained for; but still, face to face with it, he was daunted. He had to lean heavily forward against the gale. Its savage coldness clutched for his breath. It beat at him with its wings, like a sensate thing; it screamed at him; it volleyed shot-hard pellets into his face and lapped him in a swirl of spume.

"She's pretty —— wicked!" he gasped, dodging into the stable. "But I've seen wickeder, I have, by ——!"

Which was a lie to keep up his nerve, and he knew it. He had never seen a worse blizzard, he had never seen its equal, he had never seen one that could compare with it.

The Cree waiting inside was stoically rubbing snow on an ear which had been frosted when he came across from the cabin, thirty yards away. He helped Zsbyski with the gelding. It was a job to get the horse out of the barn. Its brute instinct seemed to warn that it was going to its death, that no live thing could long be abroad in the storm. It fought against leaving the building. When the side door was opened in its face, it snorted, jerked loose, and plunged back to its stall. It was brought up again and the runway barred. The Cree pried against its haunches with a two-by-four while the corporal tugged at its bridle and recollected charms he had used on the upper Saguenay. By main strength they got it outside. Zsbyski climbed into the saddle, forced it to head into the blizzard, and spurred it forward.

The route from the Mounted Post to Rivière Sans Sautes Ford led across eleven miles of high, exposed prairie cut by four timbered valleys. The upland was buried under two feet of impalpably fine snow and swept by changing, swirling windrows of drift. The deep valleys would give a moment's breathing respite from the gale, but to a horse they were almost impassable. Floundering snowbanks had piled into them to the level of the lower limbs of the whitewoods; and their windswept eastern slopes were sheeted with ice from the rain forerunner of the storm.

Coaxed and urged by voice and whip, the gelding traversed a mile and a half in hopeful time. It reached the first valley, but stopped short at the top of the icy slope. Coaxing, whipping and Saguenay charms availed not. It pranced this way and that, smelling, snorting and backing up from the ice edge. Giving it a free rein because there was nothing else to do, Zsbyski swore suddenly that the brute had something up its sleeve. He was right. When it had thoroughly inspected the slope, it gingerly approached a slick place, planted its forefeet on the ice, drew up its hind feet carefully, braced all four legs, and started slipping. Horse and rider brought up more or less orderly in a snowbank at the slope bottom.

The corporal knocked down a path through the drifted valley-level and led the horse across to the opposite slope which was sheltered from the wind and consequently snow-covered. Across the two miles to the next timber-belt the gelding butted its way through the gale. But it was getting unmanageable. The storm was breaking its nerve; the ceaseless lash of Arctic cold was driving it mad. Zsbyski knew that shortly, very shortly, he would be afoot.

At the next ice-sheeted slope the gelding's caution vanished. It plunged ahead recklessly, slipped, lost its footing, and hurtled screaming down the hill. By quickness and sheer good luck the corporal jumped clear, but he too could not stop. He careened down a hundred yards into a boulder-outcropping drift and landed almost on top of the horse.

Already unnerved by its heart-breaking fight with the blizzard, the gelding was completely crazed by its helpless sprawling down the slope. It went suddenly madbrained, savage and infuriated. In a frothing fury it lashed out at Zsbyski. He jumped back against a drift to escape the murderous hoofs. It came at him again. He could not get away. There was one thing to do to save his life; he wasted no sympathy nor split-wink in doing it. At the spurt of fire the chestnut gelding crumpled sidewise into the snow.

With a mist in his eyes which he could not keep back, Zsbyski groped about and found his racquets. The beam of one was broken. He drew off his gloves to mend it, but before he could even cut a leather from the bridle, his fingers might as well have been wooden ones. He slipped the racquets on, took a last sorrowful look at the gelding, swung across the valley-level, up the west slope, and ran into the teeth of the blizzard howling over the highland.

UP ACROSS the latitudes toward the Pole, old King Winter had bided his time, had nursed his wrath to keep it cold, and gathered his strength throughout October, November, and the first three weeks of December; to pour out all his accumulated fury in a single night and day.

The saw-tooth, high rock-hill range north of the Post was an instrument in the hands of the storm. Fissures and ozone passes were stops and keys. From a low roaring to a shrill scream the blizzard blew through them in a dozen different storm-notes. It would stop suddenly, so dead quiet that snow-flakes fluttered straight to earth. In the silence it would strike club-like, so terrific a blow that Zsbyski had to drop on hands and knees until it kicked over. The wind veered this way and that, mauling him from two quarters at once. It buried all landmarks from his sight. It tried to overwhelm him with whipping sheets of spindrift.

The cold, had it been still dry cold, would have been intense. Fifty-nine degrees below zero was bad enough alone. But the wind had climbed to thirty-five miles an hour; and the air was full of flying frost. Zsbyski had to breathe through the fur of his mittens. Even so, his lungs burned. He had to fight his way cautiously. Exertion meant deep breathing, which in turn meant frozen lungs in a trice. For the most part he plowed ahead with eyes half-closed; he could see nothing to guide him anyway. His sole compass was his instinct of direction; for the windrows of drift changed constantly with the veering gale.

In the third timbered valley he stopped a few moments. He cut off an armful of spruce boughs, scooped out a hole with his racquet, and threw in the boughs to rest on. In a general way he knew where he was, but before going on he chopped into several birches to make sure that his north and south were still straight. He could not afford to waste a step or minute in the wrong direction. Four miles were ahead of him; the snow was piling deeper and his left racquet had become a sorry excuse. The blizzard, mounting up into the forties, would be straight in his face for every yard of the distance yet to be traversed.

It took him an hour and a half to reach the next valley. His knees wobbled a bit as he stumbled and slid down the steep slope into the quiet spruce drogue. An impulse seized him to plunge on at once, to burst into those last two miles and get them over with; but he knew he would make time by stopping, and would be surer of getting there *at all*. He dug a hole as before and built a fire, for the woolens next to his skin were beginning to get damp with perspiration. At fifty-nine below with a gale blowing, damp woolens would suck the warmth from his body in no time.

As he topped the west slope to face the last two miles, Corporal Zsbyski stopped. For the first time he lost hold on his bulldog self. It seemed utterly impossible to butt into the blizzard; madness even to attempt it. It pushed him back; he could not stand erect. Until then he had believed he had a chance to get through; now he felt, without admitting it to himself, that the two miles were beyond his power.

He could go back to his fire, bank snow for shelter, drag up wood enough to last the night, and wait out the blizzard safely. Safely for himself, but how for the Doukhobors whose lives depended solely upon him?

With head bent low, swearing at his left leg which ached intolerably under its double strain, he labored on toward Rivière Sans Sautes Ford.

At the end of a mile, each individual step of which stuck in his memory, he felt exhaustion creeping over him. Back to the wind, he crouched a moment in the snow to rest. Almost instantly he was covered with drift. He shook it off and shoved ahead. He had to rest again within a few hundred yards. The next time he made a hundred yards by sheer, bare nerve. The next, fifty.

It was harder and harder to shake off the drift and battle on. The intervals of rest grew longer and longer, without his realizing it.

The interval came when Zsbyski could not get up again and drive himself forward. His left leg gave down on him. The steady sibilant *seesh-seesh-seesh* of driven snow lulled his senses. While the warm drift piled up at his back, he stared helplessly at the tiny ridge tapering to nothing in front of him. It seemed a funny thing; he laughed and swore at it. His brain had begun to lose its hold on reality.

The blizzard was raging fitfully. While the gale blew it was more intense than ever, but the periods of its slackening and silence were longer—a token that it would cease in a few hours and the still cold would settle down.

One of the periods fell now; the wind stopped abruptly and the spume laid. Between the big falling flakes the corporal saw a long tawny-and-black shadow thirty paces back on his trail. It was sitting on the snow, its nose raised, its head tilted sidewise. Behind it he thought he saw others. He rubbed the frost from his eyelashes and saw them distinctly—ten others. They were waiting complacently, as if they had waited thus before.

Through Corporal Zsbyski surged a wave of red anger. The wolves brought him back to his senses and jerked him to his feet when nothing else could have. He shook his mittened fist at them and cursed the pack. They backed up out of range and sat down again.

But not Zsbyski. He dragged on until the wind struck again; and then wisely waited until the next period of silence. Whenever he slowed down or his will started slipping, he turned and looked back through the spume. He knew but two things—the pack was behind him and the valley shelter was just in front.

He reached the slope so suddenly that he lost his footing and rolled down. The low-sweeping, snow-laden branches of a giant basswood stopped him. He recognized the tree in spite of its ice-coating. It was barely four hundred yards above the ford. He got up, dusted himself off, swore for principle's sake, and limped down the level frozen stream. It was easy going, after the struggle with the wind. In ten minutes he was at the crossing.

But neither the Doukhobors nor any signs of a buried camp could be seen.

ZSBYSKI leaned against a sapling in blank bewilderment. He rubbed the frost from his eyes and looked around. There was no mistake; he himself had helped chop that swath through the lodge-pole timber on both sides of the stream.

He shouted in Russian. No Doukhobor answered. They simply had not camped at Rivière Sans Sautes Ford.

When he realized this finally, Zsbyski sat down on a broken sapling, opened his lips and spake. He wore out five languages in ten minutes. He ripped the H. B. factor, Hewes McAulay, up the back for saying the Doukhobors were where they were *not*. He gave Nuttall a curry-combing for asking him to go get them. He keelhauled himself for risking his life, for bursting through eleven miles of blizzard, all for nothing. He gave the Doukhobors a lip-larruping for not being where they were supposed to be.

When he finished and felt relieved, Zsbyski coaxed a fire to burn, took off his mittens under its protection and set to work on his racquet—he was no longer pressed for time. As he worked he tried to think.

Something had slipped somewhere. Nuttall didn't make mistakes. The corporal looked around himself again and swore by Little Mother Volga and the Great Horn Spoon that he was sitting Johnny on the blank-blank spot. So the mistake had to be McAulay's.

It would be dark within an hour. By morning the temperature would hit sixty-five surely, perhaps seventy, below. Men, women and children, the Doukhobors would freeze to death. Zsbyski could not sit still. The thought tormented him. His racquet mended, he got up, paced the snow, and screwed his mind to the question: where in the blank-blank blank were the Doukhobors?

Unless the H. B. factor had missed his guess by miles, the band of immigrants were somewhere north of Lac Outarde. If they had come north they probably had kept to the freight-haulers' trail up the valley, for a soaking rain had made the prairies almost impassable to their man-drawn carts. It was sensible to suppose that, but it was only a sensible guess. That morning, in the process of having information thrashed out of him, Johnny Bad-Man, the quarter-breed, had said that after getting the permit at Lac Outarde Settlement, he had come home by way of Rivière Sans Sautes valley. If he had seen the Doukhobors, he probably would have mentioned something about them. That, too, was only a guess; but guesses were all that Zsbyski had to go on.

If they were not in the valley, where could they be? The only branch trail led up Little Sans Sautes. They might have taken that trail. The crossing on Little Sans Sautes was sometimes called a ford; in his excitement McAulay might have made a mistake. It was the only possibility Zsbyski could think of. He figured his chances one in ten of finding them there; but neither that fact nor his near-exhaustion stopped him from resolving to go and see.

It was getting shadowy in the valley drogues, and the pack of timber wolves, sitting in plain view, were entirely too familiar to suit Zsbyski. He knew he would have to dress them down before trying to make Little Sans Sautes Ford. Kicking snow over his fire, he loped down the frozen stream a hundred yards and stopped suddenly behind a jut of rock. When the pack rounded the jut, three of them met a hot surprize. Zsbyski would have got half a dozen at the close range if his hands, unmittened for a single minute, had not numbed on him. The other wolves faded into the nearest thicket.

"Hope that bellyful'll do you for awhile, you hungry-gutted devils," the corporal swore at the thicket, as he reloaded.

At a long swinging run, looking over his shoulder at times, he hurried down the valley. A mile above the forks he swung up over the west slope to cut straight across for Little Sans Sautes Ford. It was fully a quarter-mile away; but as he ran into the blizzard at the slope top, Zsbyski knew he had guessed correctly.

Mingled with the howl of the storm, his ears caught a strange sound—a hundred-voiced chant that rose and fell with the fury of the blasts.

The corporal leaned forward and fought his way toward it.

III

ZSBYSKI'S arrival at the Doukhobor camp was the most spectacular entry he had made in his born days. Which is saying a lot, considering the nests of permit runners he had sneaked up on during his years of police service, and considering the secret sun-dances he had broken up. Only, in this case, his spectacular entry was as much of a surprise to him as to the Doukhobors themselves. His arrival, a pure accident, was five times more impressive than if he had planned it.

As he neared the camp the chanting stopped and the veering wind fooled him. In the falling darkness he missed the camp at his first try. The arroyo itself, drifted almost level, was scarcely distinguishable from the prairie. He hit the shallow little valley a scant dozen paces above the camp, but so blinding was the storm that he did not know which way to go.

He plowed north fifty yards, swore at his wrong guess, and turned around. The wind at his back whooped him along. The way he went down that valley reminded him of Morrow's hitting three tall places on his way home. A vicious, high-screaming howl blanketed him in spindrift and dropped him precipitately over a jump-off into the very center of the camp. If he had been charioted out of the clouds, his arrival might have been a little more startling, but not much.

The jump-off he had dropped over was the snow-buried Doukhobor carts, which had been thrown together in a square with the south side open. In one corner of this miserable shelter the Doukhobors were huddled together praying. They had no fires, for Little Sans Sautes had burned that summer. Their clothes were pitifully inadequate even for zero weather. There were eighty roughly clad men. Eighty young peasant wives, their heads and arms wrapped in coarse gray woolen shawls. The rest of the two hundred were children, most of whom were under three, and many of whom had been born en route from the old country, as Zsbyski himself had been born. In the center of the group stood their leader, bare-headed, his arms upraised as he chanted; a huge, broad-bodied, wild-eyed fanatic.

In stupefied amazement the Doukhobors stared at Zsbyski as he dropped out of the storm into their camp and stood suddenly before them. The leader stopped short in his exhortations. The praying ceased; even the crying of the children was for a moment hushed. A strange figure Zsbyski must have cut in their eyes! He was snow-plastered white; the whiskers on his rocky chin were frosted white; he looked more like a storm-specter than a flesh-and-blood human.

A pock-scarred man sprang wildly to his feet and leveled an arm toward the corporal.

"Did I not prophesy to ye, brothers—?"

The rest of the sentence was flung down the wind. And before he could repeat his words, the huge leader struck him with clenched fist and knocked him sprawling.

"—— of a way to treat a prophet!" Zsbyski snorted to himself, wondering what it all meant.

He wasted little time in wondering, however; for his first glance told him the women and children were in a pitiful condition.

"Get up!" he bade the group. "Get up and follow me. I have come to lead you to shelter. You will die here. Get up and follow. Quickly."

He expected them to snatch at his offer. He was dumfounded. Not a soul of the two hundred stirred. Their eyes turned to the passion-furrowed countenance of their leader. Silently they awaited his word of answer.

"Who are ye?" he hoarsely challenged the corporal, in a Scriptural chant. "How can ye lead these people, my followers? *I* have brought them here. Here shall they stay until the Word comes to *me* to lead them hence."

The Doukhobors groaned, but not a voice was raised in opposition to the leader's fiat. His vaunt of power over his followers was no idle boast. That power was absolute; they would obey it in the face of death. They were a hard-minded people of simple, blind faith and a grim, terrible earnestness. As he bade them do, so would they do.

Zsbyski smelled trouble. He remembered Nuttall's warning that he would have to deal with a stubborn fanatic who believed that the spirt of St. John the Apostle had wrestled with his body and taken possession thereof. Swallowing his impatient anger, the corporal spoke softly, for he saw now that his hope of succeeding hung upon winning over this leader.

"Nay, you took my words wrong," he began. "Surely you shall lead these children, your followers. I am sent only as a guide to bring you to shelter. But if you stay here, how many of you will the morning find alive? Would you have your children die here tonight?"

A frenzied groan, breaking from the lips of men and women, answered the corporal's question. It was a prayer to their leader to deliver them from their suffering. But to the leader it was a thwarting of his fanatical tyranny. He clenched his fists high over his head and shouted at them till the groan died to a murmur and the murmur itself ceased under the power of his spell over them.

"Here have I led my people," he pronounced in a booming exultant chant. "From the labor and service for wicked kings I have led them; from the land of iniquities to the land which the Great White Father has promised me for my children. Shall ye cast an eye backwards? Much less shall ye return one step? Here we shall stay. When our tribulations cease, our eyes shall behold the land promised us."

The pock-scarred man leaped to his feet again and leveled an arm toward the leader.

"Ye are false!" he yelled in a frenzy. "Ye have wrestled with a devil and not the Apostle John."

He whirled to the other Doukhobors.

"Did I not tell ye, brothers? Behold! Did I not prophesy—"

Again the leader struck him cruelly in the face and knocked him sprawling.

Zsbyski had not an inkling of what the strange play meant between the two men. In his own words, he did not care a whisky —— what it meant. The women and children were freezing to death. That was the important thing.

He tried soft words again and argument with the leader. But there was no arguing with him. Reason broke in the face of his fanaticism. He refused flatly to follow.

Zsbyski thought his ears surely must be playing tricks with him. That a man could be so utterly mad as this leader was incredible.

"But you will die here to-night!" he repeated for the tenth time. "I am a guide sent to bring you to shelter."

"Ye are a fiend!" the leader boomed at the corporal. "Go!"

In desperation Zsbyski spoke past him to the Doukhobors themselves. He pleaded, threatened, ordered. He swore huge Russian oaths at them and pleaded again. A slight restlessness, a moaning among them was the sole result of his wasted breath. They stuck with their leader. So long as he kept his spell over their minds and faith, so long as he was an Apostle in their eyes, just that long there would be no budging them.

But the plea threw the leader himself into a hot anger.

"Ye fiend, ye cheat, ye devil trying my followers' faith in me!" he thundered. "Go, before the wrath of an apostle scorches ye!"

Zsbyski did not understand just then why he was being called a cheat and a devil. But the other untranslatable epithets hurled at him raised his dander. Reason and soft words had failed; they were not the corporal's long suit anyway. When it came to personal benedictions, he could make the leader look like a tongue-tied tyro. Hot under the collar at the idea of one fanatic keeping him from saving the two hundred people he had been sent to save, Zsbyski opened up on the apostle.

He committed him to seven hells and a score of purgatories. He ran through the roll call of eastern saints. He swore that the Apostle was a cloven-hoofed cheat, a horned liar, a fork-tailed impostor.

"By the beard of St. Catherine," he wound up, smacking a fist into his mitten, "if you are the Apostle John, I am Gabriel himself and your better!"

At the corporal's words the pock-scarred man jumped wildly to his feet, shouting and thrashing his arms. The murmur among the Doukhobors swelled to a hoarse outcry.

Without knowing what or how or why, Zsbyski saw his words had started something drastic. He saw, furthermore, that things were coming to a head, and coming quickly. Bending down, he loosened his racquets so that he could step out of them.

With a powerful back-hand blow the apostle knocked down the pock-scarred man for the third time. Then, roaring with rage at the stinging lash of Zsbyski's tongue, he lunged forward.

"Ye fiend, I shall break thy bones and dissolve thee!"

ORDINARILY Zsbyski would have been the Apostle's match in a stand-up fight, even though the apostle was much bigger, stronger, and longer-armed. But now the corporal was nearly exhausted by five solid hours of battling a blizzard. As he met the charge, he stepped in between the huge arms outflung to grab and crunch him. He planted a short-traveling uppercut that snapped up the apostle's head; then followed with a straight right on the tilted chin. It was a terrific blow, carrying all the steam Zsbyski had. But it was not enough. It stopped the apostle's bull charge, but otherwise scarcely fazed him.

Right then and there Zsbyski realized that shrewdness and cool boxing skill alone could save him. He was fighting not only for his life against an infuriated bear-like man, but for the lives of two hundred people besides. He got a grip on himself. He became a cool shrewd boxer. He had fought brute fighters before. The strategy always was to wear them down. Many times had he forgotten that strategy; but now in his ears rang Pedneault's words—

"You've got to be cool as a cucumber, Zy!"

Deliberately he began to whittle his enemy down. As he ducked after the straight right, he dug in a short-rib punch that made the apostle gasp. The latter charged again. Zsbyski backed off, saving his strength, landing shrewd, weakening punches, and boxing off the long-swung murderous blows aimed at him. Coolly he played for the stomach and short-ribs. For the first time in his fighting days he landed when and where he pleased. In a few minutes of hot work he had the apostle breathing like an engine piston. The lunges were weakening; the murderous blows were fewer and lacked steam.

At the right moment Zsbyski failed to back up from a lunge. He stepped in between the arms again and planted the jarring left uppercut. Then his straight, bone-smashing right landed on the tilted jaw. The apostle sagged and fell limply against him. Zsbyski slid him to the snow.

"I don't know if I c'n fight when I'm bull-mad, but b'—— Pedneault was right about me keeping cool as a cucumber!" he panted, as he drew the mittens over his raw knuckles and whirled upon the Doukhobors.

He raised his hand to still them before giving his orders. A terrific blast kicked over, leaving a dead quiet in its wake. Before Zsbyski could speak, the pock-scarred man was on his feet again, gesticulating, shouting himself hoarse. In the silence, with no huge fist to knock him down, his words rang clear and startling.

"Have I not told ye that the leader ye followed was a false leader? Did I not tell ye that he was leading ye to death? Did I not prophesy that a major saint would come to us, would abash this false devil, and deliver us? Lo! he is come! He hath confounded the impostor and lo! he hath stilled the storm. From his own lips ye have heard his name. Let us rise and do as he biddeth."

Zsbyski almost fell over. The words struck him like a cartload of bricks. He leaned weakly against a wagon-wheel and swore. By the strangeness of his arrival, by his scoffing jest, by his hard-won victory over the apostle, by everything he had done and said, he had played right into the stark mad prophecy! He had led himself to the slaughter! He understood now the strange play between the two men; understood now why the Doukhobors had stared at him as if he were either a devil or an angel. *St. Gabriel*—heaven and hell and all between —*St. Gabriel!*

He slumped against the wagon-hub and held his sides while the pock-scarred man danced about, and yelled in a triumphant frenzy at the fulfillment of his prophecy.

Presently Zsbyski wiped his eyes and looked up at his flock. Whether or not they believed he was a major saint and all the rest of the prophecy, he could not tell. But plainly they believed, now that he had confounded their false apostle, that he was divinely sent to deliver them from their pitiful sufferings and to guide them to shelter. In their mien toward him and upon their countenance was written that plain, blind belief.

Zsbyski suddenly quit swearing. In the face of their faith he could no longer swear nor laugh. A queer feeling crept over him.

All his life it had been Zsbyski's unhappy fortune, with the sole exception of the missionary Ewing, to know men of religion like the Reverend George M. Duncan. Their thread-bare, hashed and rehashed platitudes had not moved him; their towering self-righteousness had nettled him. He had seen many a one of them cowardly in the face of danger; selfish in the face of sacrifice for others; tyrannical under the cloak of their ministry. He had scoffed at them and their preachments. But at the simple, fervid faith of these people, however blind that faith might be, he could not scoff. He felt humble before it.

He thought of the well-fed, comfortable attitude of Reverend Duncan, and the strong faith of these people which had brought them from their homeland and for which they were willing to make any sacrifice. The contrast was glaring. Whatever else might be said, their belief was alive!

QUICKLY, quietly he gave his orders. They formed in fours, with strong men in front to break a path and other men at the rear to help those who could not walk alone. The carts and all the equipment were abandoned; there would be time for that when the blizzard stopped. In three minutes he hurried them out of the camp. Before the overhead screaming dropped down again to engulf them, they had followed him across the ridge and down into the shelter of Rivière Sans Sautes valley.

He would have stopped there an hour or two and built fires; but dry wood was scanty, his small belt-ax was totally inadequate for the job, and a jet darkness had fallen. Besides, open fires without blankets and heavy clothing, could not have saved the women and children for long. They had to have shelter and food quickly. He groped about in a drogue until he found a dead pitchy conifer from which he chopped a dozen lengths for torches. He lighted them, passed them back along the line, and gave the word to march.

The men breaking the path in front were relieved constantly by others. The women trudged along silently, bearing their sufferings without a moan. Both men and women were utterly exhausted. They were frozen numb, weak with hunger, and almost ready to give up the struggle. Only by the most desperate exertions could Zsbyski keep them moving. He himself was in little better shape than they; but their implicit faith in his shepherding nerved him, and his tragic responsibility goaded him past all ordinary endurance. Time after time he handed his lead torch to one of the men and fell back along the column, speaking encouragement to them, inspiriting them, and keeping their hopes alive.

From one of the women whose clothing would scarce have been ample in decent weather, he rescued a shivering, half-frozen tot and buttoned his fleece jacket over it as he stumbled back to the head of the march.

The spell of their faith was still upon Zsbyski. It was a strange spell which moved him profoundly. He had no words for it. In all his life he had experienced nothing like it. At times the ridiculousness of his situation made him look around and rub his eyes to see if the glimmering torches were actual. The very irony of it made him wince. Here he was, the cussingest, hardest-headed reprobate of the whole division, marching at the head of a band of pious Doukhobors. An irreligious, deep-dyed sinner—Reverend Duncan's words—acclaimed by them as a heaven-sent guide for their hour of stark need. Accepted by them and reverenced as their leader. Whenever he fell back along the column, they implored him to intercede for them with the Great White Father, that their misery might be lifted from them and their dolorous journey ended quickly. And solemnly, to encourage them, Zsbyski promised.

In this wise the band reached Lac Outarde Settlement an hour after midnight. To get them all quickly under shelter at the tiny hamlet of two dozen houses was a big problem. Zsbyski halted them at Duncan's residence, a spacious two-story frame. He knocked at the door several times. Duncan appeared at last; and the corporal, briefly explaining the situation, asked him to take twenty of them.

"But my good man," Duncan objected, his teeth chattering, "how in the world can I accommodate twenty? It is impossible. I can take two—no, I shall take three. But twenty—"

"You don't understand," the corporal interrupted. "I have *two hundred people*—"

"I understand that perfectly. But how in the world—?"

"It's not a question of comfort for them," the corporal interrupted again. "It's a question of their freezing to death out here in the snow, or getting under a roof quickly. Will you take fifteen then?"

"My good man, I told you I would take three. I have no room for more. Need I stand here and freeze repeating that?"

Zsbyski's jaw fell agape. He purpled with rage. His hands clenched and unclenched. For a moment he was speechless. When he did speak, his voice was husky.

"Go back to bed, you!" he growled. "I won't leave any of them here. I'd rather they'd freeze to death than stay under your roof."

"What do you mean, sirruh?" demanded the missionary, indignant yet hardly believing his ears.

"I'll tell you what I mean," Zsbyski blazed. "If ever you open your chops about religion to me again, I'll break every bone in your carcass."

"You'll answer for those words, my man," Duncan promised hotly. "You'll answer—"

Without hearing the rest of the threat, Zsbyski whirled to his band and led them on to the three houses of the H. B. establishment. At his thundering kick, Hewes McAulay thrust his head from an upstairs window. The corporal started to explain again, but he barely got the first words from his mouth.

"Great snakes!" the factor spluttered. "Wait till I jerk my pants on, Zy. I'll open up the trade and ware-rooms. You hustle 'em in there and we'll whoop up fires. I can't handle more'n a hundred for long, but we can quarter the rest on these breeds after we thaw 'em out and get something hot inside 'em."

As the window came down, Zsbyski caught fragments of an excited order—

"Sarah, heaven's sakes, wake up—women and children—"

IV

AT ONE o'clock the next afternoon, through a still bright cold of sixty-nine degrees below zero, three men loped out of the southeast prairie and racqueted into the open quadrangle of the police Post. They were Sergeant Pedneault, Corporal Zsbyski and Constable Coffey. The last-named was nursing a swollen jaw which he had not possessed the day previous. The three wore colored goggles against the blinding glare of bright-blue sky, diamond-dust snow and golden sun.

Sergeant and constable headed for the barracks door, while Zsbyski rapped at Nuttall's cabin and entered. The inspector was sweating over a letter to headquarters, but thrust it into his desk at the corporal's entrance.

"Things is lined up pretty well with the Doukhobors, sir," Zsbyski reported. "We scattered them around, four or five to a cabin, like I phoned. But Mac's still got fifty on his hands. He took two dozen of the kids in his own house where he could feed 'em milk and beef soup without their mothers seeing it and hopping on him. He isn't a rich man, and I don't see how he's going to charge the expense against the company. I'd like to say, sir—"

"We have a government fund at our disposal for such purposes, corporal," Nuttall interrupted. "McAulay will get repaid as far as money is concerned; and I'll see about him getting official thanks. But these Doukhobors—are you sure they won't pick up and wander off again before we get a location for them and get them straightened out?"

"I'm tolerably certain, sir, that they won't. I talked with them this morning and found out where they stand. You see, this apostle has got them into all their trouble with his ravings. He isn't exactly a real Doukhobor, but belongs to a special sect. The Russian word for it means "the-man-without-any-clothes," meaning Adam, sir. But the apostle is done for now. His press-teege is mashed flatter'n a bodewash chip. This pock-freckled fellow, Ilyon, was all along what you'd call a minority leader. He's one of that special sect, too. He had his own line of prophecies and ravings; and he isn't a whoop better than the apostle."

Nuttall interrupted with a short laugh.

"I'm surprized to hear you say *that*, corporal!"

Zsbyski turned red and clenched his fist.

"Why?" he demanded. "What did Hewes McAulay tell you on the phone? I gave him fair warning—"

"Please go on, corporal."

Zsbyski unclenched his fist and swallowed.

"So I talked with some of the sensible men and got 'em to elect a common ordinary human for their leader. I think they're about burned out on saints and apostles anyhow. So that's that."

The inspector nodded, and drummed a minute on the desk, thinking.

"Zsbyski, I'd like to see you get your desserts for the way you've handled this Doukhobor affair. Here is the situation. Next spring and summer several thousand of them are coming to these western provinces to settle. I happen to know that headquarters is looking around for a man who can take charge of them as they arrive and can guide them to their locations. The job carries a sergeantcy with it. Men who speak their language and ours, who know this country, and who have gumption enough to handle these immigrants, are a rare combination. It seems to me that you are the exact fit for that job. I'll recommend you; I think you deserve it both as a reward for what you did yesterday and for sheer merit's sake. If I could send you down to Regina somehow or other, I think your ability would speak for itself, in spite of the charges against you there. But headquarters seem to think you are a pretty bad egg. Whether the charges are true or not, they chalk up a big question mark against you. Headquarters can't take chances.

"Now, I'm going to see if Reverend Duncan won't withdraw his complaint. I'll phone him this afternoon—what are you fidgeting about, corporal?"

"You won't have to bother about phoning to him, sir. He's on his way over here now. He left before we did but we took the hill cut over here. And I wish, sir, you wouldn't ask any favors of him as far as I'm concerned. If you don't mind, I'll clear out of here before he comes."

"Humph!" said the inspector to himself, and added, as Zsbyski went out the door, "Jove, something's up!"

HALF an hour later a belled dog-team stopped at the cabin. A furred and blanketed figure got off the sled and entered. As Reverend Duncan unwound his fur pieces, his chin was thrust out aggressively and his manners bordered on the imperious. Nuttall asked him to be seated, but he remained standing.

"I demand, sir," he began abruptly, "that you recommend and see to it that this Corporal Zsbyski be discharged from the service. Immediately, sir."

Nuttall's eyebrows arched. He whistled under his breath.

"Please have a seat, Reverend Duncan; and explain your request. You see, I can hardly make such a recommendation without knowing why. I consider the corporal one of the best men in the division. What is the basis of your demand?"

"He is an irreligious, profane scoundrel!" Duncan rapped. "His influence here counteracts and nullifies my labors with the Indians. It is incredible, but he seems to have more power over them than I myself do. I presume it is because he is more on their level. I could bear his bad influence patiently; but when he comes to my house at midnight during a blizzard and insults me because I would not accede to his preposterous demand, then I must request you to discharge him at once."

"Insulted you?" Nuttall echoed. "I hadn't heard about that, or about any demand he made upon you."

"Naturally. He failed to report that. When he brought that band of fanatics to the Settlement, he banged on my door and demanded that I take in twenty of them. Twenty, sir! I pointed out to him that I would gladly take three but could not comfortably house any more. He flew into a rage and used vile language. He even threatened me, sir; threatened *me* with physical violence if I should ever speak to him again. As a matter of personal protection to myself, I demand—"

Under his breath Nuttall blessed himself.

"I'm sorry to hear this," he said placatingly. "Without hearing the corporal's version, I can't pass an opinion. I'll investigate—"

"The corporal's version?" hotly. "Do you mean, sir, that you think I have given a prejudiced account?"

"But maybe you don't see both sides impartially, Reverend Duncan. Zsbyski was exhausted from twelve hours of exposure fighting a terrific blizzard. He had on his hands two hundred people who needed shelter without a moment's delay. I can't help thinking that twenty was not a preposterous demand, considering that McAulay has fifty and that the *metis* with their little two-room huts have four and five apiece.

"Possibly he should not have used language on you or threatened you; but I can see why he would be angry when you refused to take in more than three of his wards. I'll make what amends to you I can; and I'll try to have him apologize. This friction between us, Reverend Duncan, must stop. Won't you meet me halfway?"

"What apology can he give that will excuse his vile language?" Duncan demanded. "What amends can you make to excuse his evil influence? I was never talked to like that or threatened with violence in my life before. I see that you, sir, are trying to justify him and take his part. I will tolerate no dilly-dallying. Are you going to discharge him or are you not?"

"I don't think the reasons are sufficient," Nuttall said frankly.

Duncan leaned forward in his chair, and lowered his voice.

"I shall have to go over your head, sir, if you refuse. I warn you, sir, that if necessary I can bring certain influences to bear on this matter. It will not redound to your credit and standing in the Service to shield a culprit, sir."

So far in the argument, Inspector Nuttall had been cool and placating. Now he flushed hotly, and his eyes lighted up.

"My Christian friend," he snapped, to the missionary's astonishment, "you made a sorry mistake just then in threatening me. I've tried to be reasonable and compromise, but you insist upon having your own way or having war. All right, war you'll get.

"You've hinted to me a dozen times about those 'certain influences' that are back of you. I'm going to call you to a show-down on them. But first you'll listen to a few plain facts.

"During your year here my men and I have gone out of our way to help you on a hundred different occasions. You accepted our help as if you thought my over-worked men were at your disposal. Instead of being grateful, you interfere with their private affairs; you write secret letters complaining about this Post and you hamstring one of my men who has done you a score of favors. From now on, Reverend Duncan, you will please to conduct your affairs without help from us. I am a bit curious to see how far you will get with these Crees when we quit bolstering you up. That is bellicose act number one.

"You've interfered with our affairs and told us what we ought to do, so I'll presume to return that compliment. I'm glad to hear that Reverend Ewing, your predecessor, is well enough to return here if he had the opportunity. Comparing his work with yours, I must say you have failed flat. He established schools and taught. He persuaded the *metis* to quit their miserable freighting and take up land to farm. He went the rounds with my patrols, week in week out—an old man, mind you. He did more, I will admit it freely, to wipe out the permit trading than I could do with my men. He made only a few dozen actual conversions to his faith, but those converts of his were a real leaven among the rest of their people. His results weren't spectacular on paper, but they were permanent results for good.

"He had the hard job, the pioneer work, to do. I'm sorry to say that you haven't even held the ground he won. His school work has gone to smash. We can't legally keep the *metis* from liquor; that's up to your moral influence, and you let them slip back into their old ways. You won't learn Cree, and you can't do effective preaching through an interpreter. What I'm driving at is this—When it comes to charges and complaints, I can rake up several myself. I'm going to send a full report of your work to Reverend Ewing and the Home Board. That's bellicose act number two.

"Another thing—this Doukhobor affair. I got the facts of that. At eight o'clock yesterday morning an Indian came to you and told you about them being up north of the Settlement. You didn't take the trouble to ask exactly where. You waited three hours after the blizzard struck before you casually told Factor McAulay; and then you gave him careless information which would have cost the lives of two hundred people if Corporal Zsbyski had not laid a long guess and found them anyway. To put the cap-sheaf on that affair, you practically refused your house to starving and freezing people. May I ask how that will sound in a complaint?

"Now you want the corporal discharged. You say, because of his evil ways. I think, because of your personal enmity toward him. Yesterday at this good hour, Corporal Zsbyski stood here listening to my final orders. He didn't know and I didn't know if he would be alive today, but he was willing to take the gamble. The fact that he got through alive doesn't make me forget his—well, his heroism. It's rather a tribute to his courage and ability. In my lay opinion, Reverend Duncan, a little profanity now and then won't count very heavy in the final reckoning when chalked up against what Zsbyski did yesterday. I propose, as bellicose act number three, to report his part of this Doukhobor affair to headquarters, and to report your part also. Your charge against him will be shown up in its true colors, after that.

"Now finally, I'm not going to discharge Zsbyski. I'm not going to reprimand him. In fact I'm going to take up the cudgels for him, instead of sitting by and seeing him ridden. You can't drag out those certain influences you talk about any too soon to suit me. It's time for the show-down.

I've faith enough in my superiors to believe that indirect, underhanded methods like you elect to use will not get very far with them."

Duncan's anger had risen steadily as the inspector rapped out his points. But behind his anger was a blanching fear, which Nuttall had shrewdly enough watched for and seen. The inspector had played boldly. He had spoken with a deal more assurance than he really felt; but he saw now that he was on solid ground.

Duncan sprang to his feet and threw on his fur coat.

"Sirruh, do you know whom you have been libeling?"

"I haven't libeled anybody; I've spoken the simple truth. But to answer your question pat, I don't really consider you a representative of your faith."

"Sirruh, you will answer for that. You will be sorry, sirruh."

"There's just one thing I'm sorry about, Duncan," Nuttall said tersely. "And that is, that I didn't call your bluff sooner. Good-day."

A FEW moments later Sergeant Pedneault rapped and entered. One of his eyes was puffed up suspiciously and his nose leaned a little to larboard. Inspector Nuttall looked at him questioningly.

"What's the matter, sergeant?"

"It's about the corp, sir—"

"What under the sun has Zsbyski done now?"

"Something's wrong with him, sir," Pedneault answered, evading the question. "He's been queer and quiet all day. For one thing he hasn't let out a single jawbreaker in my hearing, and he's had plenty of excuses. He's not sick, and I can't figure out what's come over him.

"This morning at Lac Outarde Constable Coffey made some remark about the Doukhobors and their religion. Zsbyski up and busted him on the jaw. They made up over that, though; Coffey admitted he hadn't ought to've made the remark and wouldn't make any more, and Zsbyski apologized for the wallop."

"Well, if they've squared it between them, I'm not going to stick my nose in."

"But that isn't what I came to tell you, sir," Pedneault went on. "It's about this matter of who goes to Regina. You asked me to take a couple of letters there and speak a word for Zsbyski personally. I believe, sir, that he had better go down instead of me, and talk for himself."

"That's considerate of you, Pedneault. But I can't agree to it. We're stuck here in a corner of the wilderness so far that the Service don't know we exist unless our representative knocks fireworks out of the other divisions. You're our best man—"

"That's what I used to think," Pedneault said ruefully. "Always before, I slammed the corporal around any old way. He's got stuff, but he wouldn't stay cool nor he wouldn't get fighting mad.

"So in our practise today, sir, seeing that he was quiet and not very lively during the first two rounds, I thought I'd jolly him up a little bit. I said—'Put up your mitts, Gabriel; I want to knock the halo off you.' And considering all that took place in the next ten seconds, sir, I think we'd better send Zsbyski."

The Camp-Fire

A Free-to-All Meeting-Place for Readers, Writers and Adventurers

Our Camp-Fire came into being May 5, 1912, with our June issue, and since then its fire has never died down. Many have gathered about it and they are of all classes and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, adventurers and stay-at-homes, and from all parts of the earth. Some whose voices we used to know have taken the Long Trail and are heard no more, but they are still memories among us, and new voices are heard, and welcomed.

We are drawn together by a common liking for the strong, clean things of out-of-doors, for word from the earth's far places, for man in action instead of caged by circumstance. The *spirit* of adventure lives in all men; the rest is chance.

But something besides a common interest holds us together. Somehow a real comradeship has grown up among us. Men can not thus meet and talk together without growing into friendlier relations; many a time does one of us come to the rest for facts and guidance; many a close personal friendship has our Camp-Fire built up between two men who had never met; often has it proved an open sesame between strangers in a far land.

Perhaps our Camp-Fire is even a little more. Perhaps it is a bit of leaven working gently among those of different station toward the fuller and more human understanding and sympathy that will some day bring to man the real democracy and brotherhood he seeks. Few indeed are the agencies that bring together on a friendly footing so many and such great extremes as here. And we are numbered by the hundred thousand now.

If you are come to our Camp-Fire for the first time and find you like the things we like, join us and find yourself very welcome. There is no obligation except ordinary manliness, no forms or ceremonies, no dues, no officers, no anything except men and women gathered for interest and friendliness. Your desire to join makes you a member.

IF YOU had to choose between cotton and tobacco on one hand and education and health, or even education alone, on the other, which would you consider more important? Yet our national Government, in practise, considers cotton and tobacco five and a half times more important than education.

We boast loudly about our system of free public schools. Yet there are about 5,000,000 illiterates in the United States and 3,000,000 of them are native-born.

In the war draft one man in every four "could not write a letter home or read a newspaper in English." Are we so very educated or so very Americanized?

There are over a million children between the ages of ten and fifteen at child labor. Are we so very civilized? Our "free" education is not free to them. Nearly a million and a half children between seven and thirteen are not attending any kind of educational institution. Is it really a "national" system of education?

Over half of our foreign born residents come from countries in which illiteracy runs as high as 80 per cent. Were we intelligently educated to permit this army of illiterates to come among us and then to provide so inadequately for getting rid of their illiteracy?

The national Government spends millions every year improving hogs, cattle and sheep. Does it spend even one million on educating its new citizens?

PERHAPS the most shameful commentary of all is that the advocates of greater Government attention to education must, if they hope to be heard at all, translate their arguments into economic terms, into dollars and cents. Our wise and short-sighted legislators can, for the most part, understand no other language and must be handed such things as ex-Secretary of the Interior Franklin K. Lane's estimate that our national loss due to illiteracy alone is $825,000,000 *per year*. And even that doesn't register very hard on them because they aren't able to see that far below the surface or are being paid, directly or indirectly, not to see things like that.

From 50 to 75 per cent. of school children have physical defects that interfere with normal development, most of which can be cured or improved. Herbert Hoover's Committee on Waste in Industry estimated the nation's economic loss from preventable disease at $1,800,000,000 *every year*.

Our teachers are so shamefully underpaid in comparison with other workers that it's a joke—a grim joke for which we're paying heavily in dollars and cents as well as in more valuable things and for which we are going to pay still more heavily in the future. It isn't even "good business." With billions invested in that business we pay so little to the people entrusted with getting results from it that most intelligent people are too intelligent to take the job and many that do take it are gradually starved in mind, body and soul into inefficiency.

Materialism, materialism, materialism, and not the best of materialism at that.

MANY countries upon which we look down from fancied heights of superiority are so much more intelligent than we that they actually consider education as important as army or navy and give it a regular Department in their national Government. We give it a mere Bureau in some Department and then make the Bureau ineffectual through lack of funds while we pour money into every phase of everything that has to do with commerce and industry.

But education should be left to the States, not the national Government? That's the trouble; it has been.

Read this letter from Eugene Cunningham of our writers' brigade. Do your own thinking. If this bill seems wise and needed, do not let your support be taken from it by consideration for any cause not clearly of greater importance to the country. There are not many such. If its main purpose seems to you sound, do not let your support be seduced from it by minor points raised against it.

El Paso, Texas.

The "Sterling-Reed," or, properly, "The Education Bill," is one of the hardy perennials of Congress. As its proponents for one reason or another retire, the bill goes on, introduced in each session. The Education Bill would:

1. Create a Department of Education with a Secretary in the President's Cabinet.
2. Creat a National Council of one hundred representative educators and laymen.
3. Encourage the States, by Federal aid, to meet five educational needs of national importance:
    (a) The removal of illiteracy;
    (b) The Americanization of the foreign-born;
    (c) The promotion of physical education;
    (d) The training of teachers;
    (e) The equalization of educational opportunities.

At the present time Education is officially represented, nationally, by the Bureau of Education in the Department of the Interior. Of the 1923 appropriation of $328,000,000 for the Department, the Bureau of Education received less than $162,000. On the other hand, as a speaking contrast, $895,000 was appropriated for "securing information for semi-monthly reports on cotton production and quarterly reports on tobacco production." This, it would seem, speaks for itself as to the values, respectively, of education and commerce—in the eyes of the senators.

The office of the Secretary of Education would become a working organization to better education, combat illiteracy, throughout the country; would become a clearing-house for varied information regarding information, open to educators small and large everywhere.

It is charged that the Federal Government, given such power as this bill provides, would interfere with States' rights, would attempt to standardize education and make the States conform. Actually, the bill provides only for Federal aid (of the sort given on roads-building) when requested by the States and when they have conformed to the rulings. Nothing is intended—so far as I know—to force the States to teach, or refrain from teaching, anything.—CUNNINGHAM.

* * *

AT CAMP-FIRE we've heard many reports on tarantulas, Gila monsters, snakes, vinegerones and so on, but you've no idea how many letters have come in that couldn't be printed because of the smallness of the space at our disposal. I hated to see all those letters wasted, so I saved them despite our inability to print and finally it occurred to me that the best plan was to send all of them to Dr. Lutz and Dr. Noble, our "Ask Adventure" authorities on entomology and herpetology and both of the American Museum of Natural History. Some of the information in these letters might be of interest to them and they could in any case answer with authority all questions raised and settle the various arguments that have arisen among us concerning snake-bite, scorpions, Gila monsters and the rest.

So I sent them the letters and they are answering them all at once by giving us the salient facts on these subjects. These answers are not only worth reading but worth filing away for the future as authoritative statements.

AND there arises another matter. Here are we of Camp-Fire, literally scattered all over the world and of all kinds and conditions. For over thirteen years we've been proving that, among us, we can dig up information on almost any subject or happening, however obscure and remote, and can even find people whom newspapers, detective agencies and all other agencies have failed to find. Camp-Fire comrades wander everywhere—jungle, plain, mountains, sea. Many of us are doctors, civil, mining, hydraulic, electrical engineers, geologists, prospectors, explorers, surveyors, anthropologists, collectors, botanists, foresters, zoologists, entomologists, archeologists and so on, men thoroughly or partially trained to scientific methods of thought and to careful observation.

Well, why can't we of Camp-Fire become, in a wholly informal and friendly way, a world-wide and intelligent agency for collecting scientific data and specimens and turning them over to museums or to scientific specialists equipped to turn them to the best account?

OF COURSE there is the obvious objection that nine-tenths of what is sent in will be "old stuff" or of no value for other reasons. But, with a little guidance and with care on our own part, the percentage of value can be very appreciably increased. And, on the other hand, among the worthwhile sendings may be some golden finds or leads that could have been secured by no other means. Certainly we could give valuable information on such matters as distribution and habitat, for we are scattered everywhere and going everywhere. We are thousands of exploring expeditions into the remote corners of the earth and can bring back at least a little information in cases where often there would otherwise be no information at all.

There's another phase of it. Suppose a museum or university is considering an expedition into some almost unknown region. There is the practical as well as the scientific side of it to be considered—general topography, transportation, personal equipment, disposition of natives, food and water supplies and many other vitally important matters. Can you tell me any better means of getting this kind of advance information than an appeal to Camp-Fire asking any with personal experience of the district in question to give the expedition the benefit of it? How else could you possibly get into touch with them?

BUT OUR main problem is to cut down the number of worthless reports or specimens. We know, of course, that most of our letters at Camp-Fire, though excellent for our own purposes, are of no value to science even when dealing with matters of interest to science. We know too, that reporting a tree variety or a centipede from a certain locality is of no scientific value in itself unless you are absolutely sure the specimen *is* of that variety, not merely called so by local custom or identified hastily by yourself, and unless you have certain knowledge that it was native, not imported, and unless various other things. Science can't afford to take any chances or do any guessing. In fact, to attempt to send any data or specimens to a scientist is pretty sure to be a mere nuisance unless you have at least some *scientific* knowledge of the particular field or unless you are sufficiently trained in some other scientific field to know the kind of data wanted and the kind of specimen that would be of value. Most of all, hearsay evidence has no least possible value to science except perhaps as an indication that there might possibly be something worth investigating on a hundred-to-one chance, and science usually isn't able, unfortunately, to waste its time and money on hundred-to-one chances. Most newspaper reports are valueless from a scientific point of view.

Yet, with every allowance for objections, there remains an opportunity for us of Camp-Fire to render service of real value to science. I believe that gradually we can work into giving such service.

Perhaps, odd as it may sound, there may be in Camp-Fire the germ of something that can some day bring about a more practical cooperation among scientific expeditions in the field. There is great waste there now and the need of this cooperation was first pointed out to me by a scientific explorer connected with one of the biggest institutions in the country. Perhaps Camp-Fire—but that is looking pretty far ahead into the future.

IN THE meantime here is a chance to do some collecting of value and to inaugurate an interesting little contest among ourselves. Who can send to the Museum of Natural History the largest scorpion in the United States or the longest centipede on record? We'll arrange the terms of the contests somehow so that the winner of each can be definitely determined and given a year's subscription to the magazine just by way of congratulations from his comrades at Camp-Fire.

Please read carefully Dr. Lutz' terms as to the contest. Send specimens to him at Ramsey, New Jersey, not to the Museum.

At a later Camp-Fire we'll hear Dr. Nobel on "Snake-Bite and Treatment" and, again, on hoops, milk, horn and various other queer kinds of snake we've been arguing over.

Incidentally, address to Dr. Nobel and Dr. Lutz any inquiries on subjects within their respective Sections in "Ask Adventure," but any other correspondence on these subjects, such as we've been having, should be addressed, not to them, but to the magazine. These talks of theirs, however, should give final settlement to most of the questions under debate and put at least a temporary end to our various discussions.

I have just returned from a trip to the tropics and find a great bunch of letters about stinging, biting, crawling creatures that have been causing a commotion at Camp-Fire. The confusion of common names reminds me of an incident in one of my Arizona camps. I was running a trap-lantern for moths but had just stretched out for the night when a tenderfoot from Illinois who was in the camp yelled, "Lutz! Here's a craw-dabber. Shall I bring it to you?" Fortunately for him, I happened to know that "craw-dabber" was a local name for cray-fish or craw-fish and I also knew that they did not go walking around on the Arizona desert, so I told him to leave that scorpion alone unless he wanted some excitement.

BUT AS to these letters. First, no insect ever has more than six jointed legs, so spiders, scorpions, centipedes, *et al.* are not insects. The bite, sting, or what-not of no insect is fatal to a man in good health unless he gets a good many such stings or bites all at once. Or course, the wound might become infected or the insect might be carrying some fatal disease such as yellow fever, but that is another matter.

Now. The "child of the earth" is an insect and so not fatal. As a matter of fact, it is related to ordinary crickets and grasshoppers. It can not bite or sting any more than they can and that is not at all, or at most a gentle nip. Of course, I can not be responsible for some one calling something else "child of the earth." That again is a different matter.

Spiders have eight legs and no "tail." All spiders have poison-glands that open out through their jaws and, so, the bite of any spider is poisonous. That is the way they get their living—by killing their prey with a poisoned bite. However, for the past good many years I have been picking up spiders with my naked hands and have never been bitten. Mind you, I do not advise others to do this, but it shows that spiders are not particularly vicious. Most neither try to bite nor have jaws strong enough to pierce the human skin. Even if they did, most of them do not have poison enough to do much harm to a healthy man. On the other hand, I am very cautious with large spiders, including tarantulas, because I see no use of being otherwise. It is a good plan to avoid even a pin-prick if you can do it and there is no doubt concerning a spider's bite being decidedly unpleasant when the jaws do really get through the skin.

Scorpions, whip-scorpions, "grampus," "vinegaroons," and that crowd also have eight legs and are related to spiders. True scorpions, the kinds which have the hind end of the body more or less gradually narrowed into a "tail," have a "sting" at the end of the tail and there is a poison-gland connected with this sting. In some cases this sting is no worse than that of a rather bad wasp; in others it is considerably worse; but in no case would I expect it to be fatal to a man in good health, unless the wound became infected or the man was scared to death. However, even an ordinary scorpion stinging a child or a man who was in poor condition to begin with might cause death. Scorpion-like creatures that have only a sort of thread for a tail have no way of stinging. What is usually meant by "vinegaroon" is of this sort. At most it can only give a nip with its jaws about like the nip of a good-size pinching-bug and no more fatal.

Centipedes and millipedes have more than eight pairs of jointed legs. Millipedes look like centipedes but they have two pairs of legs to what appears to be each segment of the body. They are vegetarians and harmless. Centipedes have no more than one pair of legs to each segment of the body. They are carnivorous and, like spiders, have poison-glands in connection with their jaws. The story about them is just the same as those about the spiders and the true scorpions. They are rarely, if ever, fatal, but they are not pleasant when they get through a successful attack, which is their defense. I have never been bitten by them but a man I know has gone to a great deal of trouble to get large ones for the sake of having them bite him so that he can see what it is like. He is welcome to the job so far as I am concerned, but he is still very much alive.

FINALLY, speaking from long experience hunting all of these creatures both in the United States and in the tropics, I can say that I have never known any of them to go out of their way to hurt man.

When cornered or caught, they will fight with such weapons as they have and I do not blame them.

Not quite finally either. Since we are on the subject, why not have a contest around the Camp-Fire? Who can find the longest centipede or the largest scorpion in the United States? Send them to me in ordinary alcohol such as druggists sell "for external use only," post-paid, and I will tell you their names and publish the records from time to time in *Adventure*. I will give the specimens to the American Museum of Natural History in New York City. Be sure to send your name with each specimen and truthfully tell where it was captured, also whether it was probably living there or whether it came in with a shipment of goods from the tropics.—Frank E. Lutz, Ramsey, New Jersey.

* * *

SEVENTY-EIGHT degrees below zero is cold enough for almost any one. From William Byron Mowery something in connection with his story in this issue.

Austin, Texas.

In the sense of an official, orthodox tournament, boxing did not exist in the Mounted Police. Tournaments of rifle-shooting and, I believe, one or two other activities did obtain. Alongside these official contests, however, several unofficial ones grew up, especially after the introduction of the canteen system which supplied the necessary money. These unofficial contests, among which boxing, wrestling and riding held high place, were sponsored by the men themselves; and were every whit as keenly fought as the duly reported ones.

THIS blizzard may seem a little too much for Saskatchewan; as a matter of fact, though, I have kept considerably under actual, Government-recorded figures. For degrees below zero, Prince Albert, Sask., has it all over Dawson in the Yukon; and the Saskatchewan cold is often accompanied by a devastating wind and flying frost, facts due to its lying exposed to the Barren Grounds and Hudson's Bay. Prince Albert often reports sixty-five to sixty-eight below. The Government record is 70.4. A railroad surveyor told me personally that two hundred miles north of Prince Albert he had once seen the party's spirit thermometer show 78 below; and that the blizzard was accompanied by a strong wind until it hit 60 below. In his words, "She scooped up a chunk of Hudson's Bay and slapped us in the face with it."—W. Byron Mowery.

* * *

A NUMBER of colleges have recently abolished football as distracting too much interest from studies. Anything may be overdone—even the methods adopted to correct something that seems to have been overdone. Perhaps football has been overdone. But perhaps remedying the situation by abolishing football entirely is also something overdone. It is at least a confession of inability to handle the situation. Abolishing something because you can't control it, can't retain the good in it and correct the evil in it, is the resort of weakness or lack of intelligence and understanding.

The following about college sport, from Grantland Rice's column in the New York *Herald Tribune*, is printed by courtesy of that newspaper:

> There is one rare value of college sport apart from its physical and mental side.
>
> It is the main matter of service and loyalty for the fun of the game, in which the box office plays no part.
>
> It is the last stronghold of clean sport, where there are no framed matches, no fakes, no hold-outs, no haggling over terms.
>
> You know each side is giving all it has without any thought of reward. It isn't 100 per cent. perfect. The flaws are there. But it is the nearest we have come to the amateur game where the player, at least, is no part of Big Business. Nor adding to his income.

One alarm of the colleges over football is over the large sum of money it collects at the gate (money, incidentally, that in most case supports all other college sports). But I should like to ask these colleges just how free they themselves are from the control and contamination of Great Wealth and Big Business in matters ranging all the way from source of supply to determination of curriculum and text-books and influence on the opinions of those taught.

AND I should like to ask, not the colleges but those who, like myself, are products of the colleges and have lived at least ten years in the real world, just how highly they value college as a preparation for the real world and whether they don't think that certain other reforms are much more bitterly needed than the abolishment or even the curbing of an athletic sport.

There are all kinds of colleges, good and bad, but considered as a whole not all the specious and academic arguments they may summon can meet the cold fact that the office of college is to give better equipment for life, yet that the years immediately following a college course have to be devoted largely to readjustment before advantages received reap any real harvest.

Another and more specific indictment is that they pour facts into youth but fail to teach youth how to think.

Just how much *did* we get out of college that has proved worth while and that we should not have got just the same if we had not gone to college? Most of us gained from college, I imagine, and perhaps it was worth four years out of our lives. The matter is not easy to analyze and assay. But if colleges were doing all they're supposed to do, it *would* be easy! Aside from technical and professional courses, certainly whatever gain we got was not constituted to any great extent by the facts poured into us to be forgotten.

It is no answer to say that the accumulating of facts, rather than the facts themselves, was the benefit given. Gymnastics are good training for baseball, but they don't teach you how to play.

They give us culture? Do they? Culture is not merely erudition but ability to understand and appreciate the finenesses of life as a whole.

There are so many questions to be asked the colleges! And if we want the real facts of the matter, it is not the colleges that should be asked, but we who are the products the colleges have turned out. In us lies the only test and proof. And the only chance of reform. Such college instructors as see the need and try to meet it are generally crushed by the general machine.

AND now some of the colleges are abolishing football. I wonder how many of those institutions are giving through their regular courses as much character building, loyalty, devotion, determination, cooperation and democracy as college football gives. And if a college president or professor thinks football does not train and develop the mind he has never played football.

Football is faulty. The remedy of these colleges is, not to correct and retain, but to abolish. Would these colleges relish a dose of their own methods? Colleges, and particularly these colleges, are faulty. Should we therefore, not correct and retain, but abolish?

Our too long inherited system of education has, as a whole, gone on too long and too far in its own little rut. We need a system that will educate in the real sense of that word. Bare facts can be administered by a phonograph, a radio set, or by books outside college walls.

SOMETHING from Hugh Pendexter concerning the wealth of historical material there was to draw from for his five-part story beginning in this issue.

Norway, Maine.

"*The Border Breed*" is not the story I thought I was to write. Plain sailing was impossible once I picked 1800-1814 for the period to be covered. Cross-currents at the outset joggled my frail bark most confoundedly. Careful navigation was well near impossible with so much to behold and study closely. At the start I had in mind a story of the great migrations during the high-tide of flat-boat travel, featuring the banditti in Cave-in-Rock, mouth of Cache River, Stack Island, and with the action carrying up the Natchez Trace, as those escaping the river pirates disposed of their cargoes and returned home overland.

AS I worked into the accumulated data I quickly discovered there was a novel in almost any county of Tennessee or Kentucky, innumerable novels across the Ohio in the State of Ohio, or in Indiana, or Illinois. But let the locale be where I would there were the cross-currents, each current demanding a novel, and yet impossible of being adequately presented without some explanation of the tugging effects of the other currents.

I had in mind a yarn, placed somewhere on the border, where the worst thing you could say of a man was "He has no neighbors." It was the cooperation and humanness of the border breed that impelled me to write, but there was no keeping the action in any one locale. Too many men were off a-warring with enough returning to tell of what they had done and seen. So, instead of writing a pioneer story around Hickman County, Tennessee, or about the Illinois country, etc., I find I've turned out a Cook's traveling tour, ranging from the northern part of Ohio to Natchez, with side trips into the Creek Nation.

HERE are some of the books I used in building the story: "Outlaws of Cave-in-Rock," by Rothert. This is the best work on this vicious phase of Ohio and Mississippi travel and commerce; Howe's "Great West;" Drake's "Book of the Indians;" Schoolcraft, for intimate dope on Creek Indians; "Western Annals," by Perkins; "History of Hickman County," Spence; Ramsey's "Annals of Tennessee;" a dozen or more volumes of "Early Western Travel;" Bulletins 43, 30, 69, also various Annual reports of the Bu. Am. Eth.; Dunbar's "History of Travel in Am.;" Winsor's "Mississippi Valley;" Lossing's "Field Book of 1812 War;" "Narrative and Critical History of N. A.;" Larned's "Hist. Ready Reference;" Howe's "Historical Collections of Ohio;" Blair's "Indian Tribes of Upper Miss. and Gt. Lakes," vol. 2; Charlevoix's "Journal of a Voyage," vol. 2, for early glimpses of Miss. River travel; Heiskell's "Andrew Jackson & Early Tenn.;" Dr. Pusey's "Wilderness Road to Kentucky;" Webber's "Wild Scenes and Wild Hunters;" Waldo's "Memoirs of Jackson;" Frost's "Andrew Jackson."

After absorbing these and brooding over the wealth of material offered I hankered to write of Andrew Jackson and did think I should play him up prominently. And I found I was swamped by material. There was Tecumseh and his remarkable work in uniting the red nations against the Seventeen Fires. He deserved a novel as one of the greatest of the original Americans. There is the affair of Sept. 12, 1814, when the British attacked Fort Bower on Mobile Point, and the *Hermes* blew up, and the rest of the fleet withdrew. In writing about it to Major John Reid, Jackson is refreshingly American in stating, "We gave them a severe mauling." As the enemy had allowed the fort but 20 minutes to capitulate in, Old Hickory put it mildly. Especially when we remember that defeat cost the British their red allies and spurred up recruiting for New Orleans.

I HAD planned to have the yarn end with the fighting at New Orleans, when on Dec. 23, Jackson with amazing audacity brought on the first fight, destroyed the general belief that the Americans "wouldn't fight," and caused the enemy to believe Jackson's forces were vastly stronger than they were in fact. And that miracle, at least a mystery, of the battle of Jan. 8, 1815, when in twenty-five minutes of fighting the British lost 700 killed, 1,400 wounded, and 500 prisoners, lost their commander, General Pakenham, brother-in-law of the Duke of Wellington and a veteran of twenty years of warfare, with the American loss of 8 killed and 13 wounded. A rattling story could be written around what happened in and about New Orleans from the time of Jackson's arrival and the eventful Jan. 8th. Gen. Jackson wrote Gov. Blount of Tennessee that had he had 3,000 more stands of arms he would have captured the whole British army. And adds, "But the Lord's will be done."

John Sevier, in Congress, writes his son, "Orleans mail has arrived. City brilliantly illuminated. The Army of Tennessee most talked of in the world. Wellingtonians think somewhat differently of Americans."

And who could ever imagine a Jackson surrendering Detroit and an army as did the incapacitated Hull? News of peace reached New Orleans on a Monday, March 15, 1815. Although fought after peace had been agreed to, it compelled a world respect for the new republic. No historian can say we won the 1812 war because of foreign sympathy and help. We stood alone.

NEWS of the Mimms massacre required 31 days to reach New York but did not create much of a sensation. At the time the whole country was feverishly exultant over Perry's victory on Lake Erie, and was absorbingly interested in Gen. Harrison's invasion of Canada. But the misery, suffering, and horrible fear in the Southwest cannot be depicted. The Southwest had to do its own fighting, and this section of country felt far removed from northern triumphs and was absorbed by the uprising of the Creeks.

Reverting to the Battle of New Orleans I will remind that had we had modern means of communication there would have been no battle, and Jackson's fame would have rested on his Creek battles. The treaty of peace was signed at Ghent, Dec. 24, 1814. Two days later Henry Carroll, a secretary of the American envoys, started for home with a copy of the treaty. Jan. 2, 1815, he sailed from Portsmouth. He landed on a Saturday, Feb. 11, at the Battery, New York. The following day he started for Washington, arriving Tuesday night. Nearly two months, traveling as fast as the times permitted, were used in bringing information which would have prevented that 25 minutes of deadly rifle-fire, would have saved the life of the Iron Duke's brother-in-law, and many lives, and left Jackson without the prestige of winning one of the most decisive battles ever fought on the continent.

The cannon balls used by Jackson at New Orleans were cast at the Cumberland Furnace on Barton Creek, Dickson County, Tenn.

IN THE Fort Mimms massacre I have followed history closely. According to Pickett's "Alabama," vol. 2, p. 276, those escaping through the pickets were Dr. Thomas G. Holmes; Hester, a negro woman; Socca, friendly Indian; Peter Randon, a lieutenant in citizens' company; Josiah Fletcher; Sergeant Matthews; Martin Rigdon; Samuel Smith, a half-blood; Mourrice, and Joseph Perry of the Miss. Vols.; John Hoven; Jones; Lieut. W. R. Chambliss, Miss. Vols.

After the war Weatherford settled on a farm in Monroe County, Ala. He died March 9, 1824.

IN MY notes made for this rambling talk I find interesting data on Samuel Mason's military record and early life; on Clark's men who settled on Corn Island; of the first robberies on the Natchez Trace; of Philip Alston, the Ohio River "Raffles" of the late eighteenth century; of Duff and other counterfeiters at Cave-in-Rock; of the Ford Ferry gang; of Captain John Gordon of the Spies and his dangerous trip alone to Pensacola; of Gen. Sam Dale, of Georgia, who deserves a novel all by himself; of Sam Houston, beginning his spectacular career; of Gen. Cocke's court-martial by Jackson and his subsequent service under Jackson; of Jackson's and Gen. Coffee's terrific fight with Thomas and Jesse Benton and Stokely Hayes in front of, and inside of, the City Hotel at Nashville, and the friendship between Jackson and Old Bullion in later years; of Nick-a-Jack Cave, thirty-six miles below Chattanooga, the great resort of red and white banditti in 1779. And more.—PENDEXTER.

* * *

OUR Camp-Fire Stations are spreading steadily over the map. Help make them grow. Any qualified person can start a Station.

A STATION may be in any shop, home or other reputable place. The only requirements are that a Station shall display the regular Station sign, provide a box or drawer for mail to be called for and preserve the register book.

No responsibility for mail is assumed by anybody; the Station merely uses ordinary care. Entries in register to be confined to name or serial number, route, destination, permanent address and such other brief notes or remarks as desired; each Station can impose its own limit on space to be used. Registers become permanent property of Station; signs remain property of this magazine, so that if there is due cause of complaint from members a Station can be discontinued by withdrawing sign.

A Station bulletin-board is strongly to be recommended as almost necessary. On it travelers can leave tips as to conditions of trails, etc., resident members can post their names and addresses, such hospitality as they care to offer, calls for any travelers who are familiar with countries these residents once knew, calls for particular men if they happen that way, etc., notices or tips about local facilities and conditions. Letters to resident members can be posted on this bulletin-board.

Any one who wishes is a member of Camp-Fire and therefore entitled to the above Station privileges subject to the Keeper's discretion. Those offering hospitality of any kind do so on their own responsibility and at their own risk and can therefore make any discriminations they see fit. Traveling members will naturally be expected to remember that they are merely guests and act accordingly.

Keepers answer letters only if they wish. For local information write "Ask Adventure."

A Station may offer only the required register and mail facilities or enlarge its scope to any degree it pleases. Its possibilities as headquarters for a local club of resident Camp-Fire members are excellent.

The only connection between a Station and this magazin is that stated above, and a Keeper is in no other way responsible to this magazine nor representative of it.

Arizona—200—Clifton. C. Hooker.
209—Quartzite. Buck Conner, Box 4.
285—Yuma. W. P. Kline, 4th Ave. & 8th St.
Arkansas—161—Hot Springs. Tom Manning, Jr., 322 Morrison Ave.
California—28—Lost Hills. Mr. and Mrs. M. A. Monson, Cottage Inn.
60—San Bernardino. Charles A. Rouse, Hotel St. Augustine.
73—Galt. E. M. Cook, Box 256.
74—Eagle Rock. John R. Finney, 109 Eddy Ave.
89—Chico. K. W. Mason, 1428 Park Ave.
108—Helendale. G. R. Wells, P. O. Box 17.
113—Vallejo. Edith G. Engesser, Golden Triangle Rabbitry, Highway Homes.
114—Mill Valley. L. F. Guedet, Restawhyle Knoll.
115—Los Gatos. G. H. Johnson.
116—Sebastopol. Mrs. Lucy E. Hicks, 420 S. Main St.
126—Covelo. Whit H. Ham, Box 388.
141—Santa Cruz. A. W. Wyatt, Capitola Road and Jose Ave.
149—San Francisco. A. H. Hutchinson, Veteran Press, 1264 Valencia St.
186—Santa Ysabel. William Strover, Santa Ysabel Inn.
210—Berkeley. Dr. Louis C. Mullikin, 305 Acheson Bldg.
211—Pomona. Fred G. Sunley, 480 E. Alverado St.
212—Del Monte. Alex H. Sokoloff, 3rd Signal Co. R. O. T. C.
231—San Francisco. Earl V. Swift, 24-A Brady St.
251—Williams. Joe Lanouette, Opera Pool Hall.
252—Fresno. Mrs. Harriet Church, Echo Gardens; 712 Echo Ave.
257—San Francisco. K. F. Richards, 1807 Post St.
266—Santa Barbara. E. Chester Roberts, 714 State St.
273—Los Angeles. Henry M. Harrod, 6615 So. Main St.
286—Sacramento. Carl W. La Force, 2329 Eye St.
287—Stockton. Ivan J. Dill, 520 E. Washington St.
298—La Mesa. Alan Wanbough, 343 Spring Street.
Colorado—105—Grand Junction, Bart Lynch, 236 Main St.
267—Sugar Loaf. Frank Earnest.
279—Denver. DeForrest Hall, 2531 Bryant St. E.
Connecticut—142—Meriden. Homer H. Brown, 1 Colony Place.
Delaware—232—Delmar. J. A. Aniba, Stone House Hotel.
D. C.—167—Washington. Walter A. Sheil, 503 Sixth St. N.E.
Florida—87—Miami. A. C. Smith, 49 N. E. First St.
117—Miami. Miami Canoe Club, 115 S. W. South River Drive.
128—Titusville. Max von Koppelow, Box 1014.
138—St. Petersburg. Miss Maude V. Hughson, 2402 First Ave. So.
139—St. Petersburg. Capt. Lee Whetstone, Hotel Poinsettia.
143—St. Petersburg. J. G. Barnhill, 10 Third St. N.
158—Crescent City. E. N. Clark, care *Call*.
188—Johnson. Clifford Martin.
258—Jacksonville. T. J. Eppes, The Hobby Shop.
262—Wildwood. E. M. Dilly, L. B. 114.
285—Tampa. R. Stuart Murray, Mezzanine Floor, Hillsboro Hotel.
288—Orlando. O. D. Young, 112 Court St.
Georgia—98—Hinesville. R. N. Martin, *The Liberty County Herald*.
289—Monticello. O. E. Wells.
Idaho—110—Pocatello. C. W. Craig, 223 S. Second Ave.
Illinois—66—Mt. Carmel. W. C. Carter, 1122 Chestnut St.
67—Plainfield. J. P. Glass, The Linshield Co.
189—Chicago. Herman A. Schell, 8708 Vincennes Ave.
213—Chicago. Pietro Ferraro, 1007 S. Peoria St.
237—Chicago. Wm. Churchill, 6541 S. State St.
253—Chicago. G. C. Huebner, 2608 Magnolia Ave.
303—Chicago. Leslie C. Marshall, 9155 Normal Blvd.
290—Gibson City. J. D. Ashley, 117 Sangamon Ave.
66—Chester. Capt. W. B. Barter.
Indiana—18—Connersville. Norba Wm. Guerin, 112 East Eighteenth St.
90—Linton. Herschell Isom, 73 Tenth St., N. E.
180—Warsaw. Homer Lewis.
287—Vincennes. John C. Maloney, 1004 N. Seventh St.
Iowa—238—Atlantic. George Woodbury, 5 E. Third St.
Kansas—228—Leavenworth. Ben H. Lukenbill, 315 Shawnee St.
Kentucky—144—Corbin. Keith Mauney.
190—Louisville. H. S. Summers, 421 W. Jefferson St.
Louisiana—140—New Orleans. J. D. Montgomery, Navy Recruiting Office.
228—St. Rose. C. M. Elfer.
Maine—19—Bangor. Dr. G. E. Hathorne, 70 Main St.
59—Augusta. Robie M. Liscomb, 73½ Bridge St.
111—Lewiston. Howard N. Lary, 714 Main Street.
243—Winthrop. O. A. Abbot.
Maryland—55—Baltimore. Henry W. L. Fricke, 1200 E. Madison St., at Asquith.
82—Baltimore. Joseph Patti, Jr., 4014 E. Lombard St.
151—Williamsport. L. J. Schaefer, Frederick St.
Massachusetts—56—Watertown Arsenal. E. Worth Benson, Station Hospital.
274—Everett. Aubrey S. McLellan, 4 Marion Place.
Michigan—69—Grand Rapids. Dr. A. B. Muir, 1121 Turner Ave., N. W.
79—Lansing. Geo. H. Allen, *Lansing Industrial News*, 109½ N. Washington Ave.
106—Gaylord. Sidney M. Cook.
131—Muskegon. James Fort Forsyth, Forsythia, R. F. D. No. 3.
137—Flint. O'Leary & Livingston, 309 So. Saginaw St.
192—Pickford. Dr. J. A. Cameron, The Grand Theater.
227—Adrian. S. N. Cook, 221 Clinton St.
Minnesota—112—St. Paul. St. Paul *Daily News*, 92 E. Fourth St.
311—Canby. Joe Millard, Minnesota State Fair.
145—St. Cloud. F. T. Tracy, 426 Eighth Ave. N.
299—Minneapolis. Russell Hearne, 411 First Ave. N.
Mississippi—88—Tunica. C. S. Swann, Tunica Plumbing & Electric Shop.
99—Picayune. D. E. Jonson.
268—Pascagoula. C. E. Walter, 239 Orange St.

Missouri—51—St. Louis. W. R. Hoyt, 7921 Van Buren St., phone Riverside 250.
94—St. Louis. C. Carter Lee, M. D., 3819 Olive St.
127—Salem. Emmet C. Higgins, 100 N. Tenth St.
289—Nevada. T. S. Hope, 705 N. Clay St.
Montana—240—Fort Missoula. Company C, 4th Infantry.
254—Hamilton. Mrs. Lucy Hyde, 64 N. Second St.
288—Anaconda. R. T. Newman.
Nebraska—95—Omaha. L. W. Stewart, 119 No. 16th St.
214—Tecumseh. Dr. C. F. Roh.
New Hampshire—316—Concord. R. E. Colby, 81 N. Main St.
New Mexico—96—Silver City. Edward S. Jackson, Box 435.
203—Elephant Butte via Engle. Henry Stein.
229—Santa Fé. N. Howard Thorp, 103 Palace Ave.
290—Santa Fé. Ralph E. Pierson.

New Jersey—91—Tenafly. Ed Stiles, P. O. Box 254.
146—Paterson. Charles S. Gall, 378 Dakota St.
164—Chatham. Roy S. Tinney.
244—East Orange. Alfred C. Swenson, 77 Lawton St.
245—Corbin City. Lee Roberts.
260—Camden. Benj. P. Thomas, 2791 Constitution Rd.
269—South Orange. Eugene Connett, 170 Turrel Ave.
275—Camden. Captain Herbert George Sparrow, Ship No. 1269 Naval Post, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Armory of Second Battalion, Naval Militia of New Jersey, Temple Theater Building, 415 Market St.

New York—23—Jamestown. W. E. Jones, 906 Jefferson St.
34—New York City. St. Mary's Men's Club, 142 Alexander Ave., Bronx, N. Y. C.
147—Youngsville. Harry Malowitz, Youngsville House.
165—Saratoga. Wm. Marshall, Office No. 9, Chamber of Commerce Arcade.
177—Brooklyn. George Iverson, 306 Macon St.
185—Brooklyn. J. M. Canavan, 69 Bond St.
193—Niagara Falls. Roy Tompkins, 1155 Garret Ave.
194—Hadley. Mrs. Chas. H. Black.
205—Newburgh. Jacques Teller, 5 Golden St.
215—Yonkers. George's Sport Shop, 45 Main St.
226—Red Hook. P. W. E. Hart, The Silver Birch Shop, Albany Post Road, Dutchess Co.
230—New York City. Fred G. Taylor, 424 Broadway, Dobbs Ferry.
233—Albany. R. N. Bradley, 84 Livingston Ave.
239—Valley Stream, Long Island. Arthur Borchmann, Centarlane.
298—Walton. S. K. Sherman.
314—Binghamton. Harold E. Snedeker, 41 Riverside St.

North Carolina—92—Biltmore. C. Marshall Gravatt, Felstone Co.
133—Pine Bluff. N. Steve Hutchings.
159—Waynesville. Harry M. Hall, 720 Walnut St.
255—Tryon. Howard Shannon.

North Dakota—206—Fairmount. Frank Kitchener, Richland Hotel.
Ohio—52—Ulrichsville. Anthony Sciarra, 329 W. Fourth St.
58—Cleveland. J. F. Thompson, Community Pharmacy, 9505 Denison Ave.
63—Ulrichsville. Chas. F. Burroway, 312 Water St.
75—Columbus. Chas. W. Jenkins, 54 S. Burgess Ave.
113—Buena Vista. Geo. T. Watters.
166—Toledo. Frank P. Carey, 3267 Maplewood Ave., or wherever his Ford happens to be.
207—Columbus. Tod S. Raper, 77 Taylor Ave.
241—Cincinnati. D. W. Davidson, 1414 Vine St.
242—Bellefontaine. Harry E. Edselle, 328 Plumvalley St.
263—Toledo. F. P. Carey, Box 143, Station A.
264—Toledo. S. G. La Plante, 1820 Dunham St.
291—Ravenna. McGraw and Eckler.
292—Oberlin. E. A. Sherrill, Sherrill Acres, Chicago-Buffalo Highway, State Route No. 2.
Oklahoma—57—Haskell. Roy Holt.
313—Oregon. F. L. Buker, Waldpart.
225—Shawnee. A. M. Postlethwaite, 521 N. Beard St.
234—Blackwell. H. W. Willis, 204½ N. Main St.
Oregon—4—Salem. D. Wiggins.
286—Portland. W. C. Chapman, 24 Union Ave.
Pennsylvania—20—Philadelphia. Wm. A. Fulmer, 267 S. Ninth St.
21—Braddock. Clarence Jenkins, Union News Co.
24—Philadelphia. Alfred A. Krombach, 4159 N. Eighth Street, and Spring Mills Station, P. & R. Ry. Co., Montgomery County.
78—Pittsburgh. Peter C. Szarmach, 3030 Brereton St.
100—Philadelphia. Veterans of Foreign Wars, 929 N. 41st St.
182—Greensburg. Don Frederick Wermuth.
224—Oil City. J. M. Blair, 608 W. Front St.
247—Pittsburgh. J. F. Lichtenhaer, 224 Swope St.
248—Philadelphia. Carl D. Charles, 214 East St. Wissahickon.
261—Shippensberg. *The Chronicle*, 12 South Earl St.
312—Athens. Thomas L. Stalford, The Hiker (Spanish War Hdqts.), 112 N. Main St.
South Dakota—179—Fairburn. Jesse K. Fell, *Custer County Press.*
270—Centerville. C. H. Hornbeck, *The Centerville Journal.*
South Carolina—97—Charleston. J. W. Mette, Navy Yard.
217—Charleston. J. H. Keener, 346 King St.
293—Florence. S. B. Stacey.
Tennessee—195—Knoxville. C. G. Pruden, 2024 Rose Ave.
Texas—33—Houston. J. M. Shamblin, 4805 Oakland St.
123—San Juan. D. L. Carter, Box 436.
134—Breckenridge. Joe Randel, 226 Baylor Avenue.
148—Port Arthur. Ralph C. Cornwell, 215 Eighth St.
174—San Angelo. E. M. Weeks, 24 West Eighth St.
183—South San Antonio. J. F. Nicodemus, Box 111, So. San Antonio Transfer.
218—Fort Worth. Robert Lentz, R No. 6 Box 73.
271—Harlingon. H. C. Jennings, Box 324.
280—Reese. L. H. Baker.
294—Coleman. Clyde Ransberger.
300—Pecos. Oram Green, Third and Cedar Sts.
310—El Paso. H. B. Stout, 1114 North Copia St.
Utah—157—Salt Lake City. Ned Howard, 127 N. St.
Virginia—108—Cape Charles. Lynn Stevenson, P. O. Box 26.
219—Richmond. Wm. Meek, 104 S. 1st St.
Washington—1—Ione. Evan Morgan, Albert's Billiard Hall.
61—Burlington. Judge B. N. Albertson, Fairhaven Ave.
83—Seattle. Chas. D. Raymer, Raymer's Old Book-Store, 1330 First Ave.
154—Mt. Vernon. Miss Beatrice Bell, Western Washington Auto Club.
155—Olympia. B. F. Hume, Commercial Club Rooms.
172—Sunnyside. Mark Austin.
196—Arlington. F. T. Herzinger.
220—Sultan. George W. Snyder, Main St., opp. P. O.
281—Warm Beach. Paul E. Vollum and Kirkham Evans, Evans Bldg.
West Virginia—48—Huntington. John Geiske, 1682 Sixth St.
299—Fairmount. Dr. J. W. Ballard, 314 Main St.
Wisconsin—41—Madison. Frank Weston, 401 Gay Bldg.
Alaska—295—Ketchikan. Thwaites Photo Shop, Ingersoll Hotel Bldg., Front St.
Australia—39—Melbourne. William H. Turner, "Wolwoling" Keen St. Northcote; and Carters' and Drivers' Union, 46 William St.
282—Ryricton, Victoria. Thomas T. Winter, care of Post Office.
76—Victoria. Chas. M. Healy, 30, The Avenue, Windsor Post, Dist. No. 8.
130—Brisbane. H. V. Shead, Sutton St., Kangaroo Pt.
235—Sydney. Phillip Norman, 842 Military Road, Nosman, Newtown.
278—Belgrave, Victoria. Raymond Paule, Carn Brea; Old Monbulk Road.
Belgium—131—Antwerp. Reuben S. James, Place de l'Entrepot 3.
British Columbia—231—Stewart. Jack O'Shea, Ryan Bldg.
236—Vancouver. A. Johnson, 552-3 Hastings St.
Canada—31—Howe Sound, B. C. C. Plowden, Plowden Bay.
84—White Rock, B. C. Charles L. Thompson.
22—Burlington, Ontario. T. M. Waumsly, Jocelyn Bookstore.
4—Dunedin, P. E. Island. J. N. Berrigan.
29—Deseronto, Ontario. Harry M. Moore, *The Post Weekly.*
45—Norwood, Manitoba. Albert Whyte, 84 La Riviere St.
30—Winnipeg, Man. Walter Peterson, The Carleton Hotel, 216 Notre Dame Avenue.
62—Woodstock, Ontario. George L. Catton, 94 Metcalfe St.
85—Oshawa, Ontario. J. Worral, 6½ King St. E.
102—Amherst, Nova Scotia. Lloyd E. MacPherson, 5 Belmont St.
124—Hartshorn, Alberta. Leonard Brown, 33-34-17 W4M.
178—Moncton, N. B. Chas. H. McCall, 178 St. George St.
221—Montreal East. M. M. Campbell, 95 Broadway.
249—Fallowfield, Ontario. Ernest Armstrong.
250—Sault Ste. Marie. James McDonald, 504 Queen St. E.
276—Skyland, Page Co., Va. N. Mackintosh,
277—Barrie, Ontario. R. F. Smith.
300—Halifax, N. S. Audler S. Lee, 551Gottingen St.
Canal Zone—37—Cristobal. F. E. Stevens.
156—Ancon. Arthur Haughton, Box 418.
China—222—Tientsin. Dr. George W. Twomey, 43 Rue de Amiraute.
Cuba—15—Havana. Ricardo N. Farres, Dominquez, 7 Cerro.
England—296—Longton, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire. William Berry, 19 Weston Place, off Heathcote Road.
Egypt—173—Khartoum, Sudany. W. T. Moffat, Sudan Customs.
Germany—283—Dusseldorf. Hans Derrick Hulsmann, care R. A. Visser & Co.
Guatamala—315—Puerto Barrios. John R. Strange, United Fruit Co.
Hawaiian Islands—170—Leilehua, Oahu, Château Shanty.
272—Honolulu, Hawaii. Hubert T. Miller, Room 4, Silent Hotel.
Honduras, C. A.—32—Galeras, Olancho. Dr. Wm. C. Robertson.
70—La Ceiba. Jos Buckly Taylor.
India—197—Calcutta. W. Leishman, 46 Wellesley St.
Mexico—68—Guadalajara, Jal. W. C. Money, Hotel Fenix, Calle Lopez, Cotilla Nos. 269 a 281.
Navy—71—U. S. *Arizona.* Elmer E. McLean.
Newfoundland—132—St. John's. P. C. Mars, Smallwood Bldg.
Nova Scotia—297—Dartmouth. W. E. Sievert, Portland St.
Porto Rico—46—Ensenada. M. B. Couch, P. O. Box 5.
Philippine Islands—198—Manila. W. W. Weston, De La Rama Bldg.
Virgin Islands—301.—St. Thomas, Joseph Reynolds; The Grand Hotel.

SERVICES TO OUR READERS

Lost Trails, for finding missing relatives and friends, runs in alternate issues from "Old Songs That Men Have Sung."

Old Songs That Men Have Sung, a section of "Ask Adventure," runs in alternate issues from "Lost Trails."

Camp-Fire Stations: explanation in the second and third issues of each month. Full list in second issue of each month.

Various Practical Services to Any Reader: Free Identification Card in eleven languages (metal, 25 cents); Mail Address and Forwarding Service; Back Issues Exchanged; Camp-Fire Buttons, etc., runs in the last issue of each month.

Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure* Magazine by Our Staff of Experts.

QUESTIONS should be sent not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the section in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert may give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections, subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided self-addressed envelop and *full* postage, *not attached,* are enclosed. (See footnote at bottom of page.) Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union. Be sure that the issuing office stamps the coupon in the left-hand circle.**

2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**

3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**

4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**

5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose section it seems to belong.**

> ***Please Note:*** **To avoid using so much needed space each issue for standing matter and to gain more space for the actual meat of "Ask Adventure" the full statement of its various sections and of "Lost Trails" will be given only in alternate issues. In other issues only the bare names of the sections will be given, inquirers to get exact fields covered and names and addresses from full statement in alternate issues. Do *not* write to the magazine, but to the editors of the sections at their home addresses.**

1—3. The Sea. In Three Parts
4—6. Islands and Coasts. In Three Parts
7, 8. New Zealand and the South Sea Islands. In Two Parts
9. Australia and Tasmania
10. Malaysia, Sumatra and Java
11. New Guinea
12, 13. Philippine and Hawaiian Islands
13—18. Asia. In Five Parts
19—26. Africa. In Eight Parts
27, 28. Turkey and Asia Minor
29—35. Europe. In Six Parts
36—38. South America. In Three Parts
39. Central America
40—42. Mexico. In Three Parts
43—51. Canada. In Nine Parts
52. Alaska
53. Baffinland and Greenland
54—59. Western U. S. In Six Parts
60—64. Middle Western U. S. In Five Parts
65—74. Eastern U. S. In Ten Parts
A. Radio
B. Mining and Prospecting
C. Old Songs That Men Have Sung
D1—3. Weapons, Past and Present. In Three Parts
E. Salt and Fresh Water Fishing
F, G. Forestry in the U. S. and Tropical Forestry
H—J. Aviation, Army and Navy Matters
K. American Anthropology North of Panama Canal
L. First Aid on the Trail
M. Health-Building Outdoors
N. Railroading in the U. S., Mexico and Canada
O. P. Herpetology and Entomology
Standing Information

Florida

THERE are other things to do there besides to go into the real estate business:

Request:—I will make my questions as much to the point as possible, thereby giving you less trouble in answering.

Being an ex-service man and having been reduced considerably in health and efficiency by this service, and searching for a more healthful and agreeable climate where there exists a very good opportunity of getting employment or establishing a business of my own after a time, Florida somewhat is given due consideration. However, I understand conditions as to employment is not answered by the editor of their respective regions.

Questions:

1. What is the population of Orlando and main industries?
2. Is this considered a good locality and healthy climate, or could you recommend some town smaller that would prove a good location?
3. Would preferably wish to locate in some small town of three to five thousand population that has good prospects of advancement. Could you cite me to a location of this kind?
4. Describe Pensacola and industries including aviation activities. Also Miami, Jacksonville, Tampa, Key West (briefly).
5. Do you think a man with average intelligence and ability could break into some profitable industry at this time of the year? Will be able probably to get over there in August.
6. If other States in your mind would be a better place for me to locate, please advise.

I can give the best of references. Qualifications are: General automobile experience; chauffeur; truck driver; aviation work and generally handy, willing to do anything if future is promising or is a step to something better.

Your valuable knowledge is kindly requested and information not herein stated would indeed be very highly appreciated. I assure you your answer will be the main factor in deciding the proper location for me.—Thurel Molyneaux.

Reply, by Mr. Liebe:—Now to your questions in proper order:

1—Population of Orlando is around 18,000. It is in a section devoted mostly to fruit-growing, with some vegetable interests. Not much of a manufacturing town. Many tourists in winter. Countless automobiles, and many garages; fine roads, finest town in Florida, undoubtedly.

2—Splendid locality. Healthfulness unexcelled anywhere, probably. Next to Orlando, I would prefer Lakeland, St. Petersburg, Eustis, Sanford, Daytona as a place to live in.

3—A good town of some three thousand. Eustis, Haynes City, Leesburg.

4—Pensacola has a general line of industries—lumbering, fishing, some manufacturing, boat-building, etc. In my opinion, this is in the worst part of the State. Miami's big interests are: catering to tourists, real estate, some manufacturing in concrete and building lines, with some vegetable and fruit interests in adjoining sections. Tampa is a little more solid, and has a good deal doing in cigar-making, with some lumbering and ship-building. Jacksonville is probably the biggest manufacturing city of them all; there is usually a great deal going on there, though in the winter months, as in the other cities named, there is apt to be more workers than work. As for aviation, that is not in my line. However, there is a field of one size or another near any of these cities, though not necessarily a Government field.

5—I'm told that there is plenty of work here in building lines, just now.

6—I think Florida is by far the livest state in the South at present.

Perhaps your best and safest bet here would be automobile work. It should be no trouble to get a job at that, in any town in Florida.

Should this be published, your name and address will be omitted, as you request. I'm wishing you all good luck.

Names and addresses of department editors and the exact field covered by each section are given in the next issue of the magazine. Do NOT write to the magazine itself.

Lumbering in Mexico

WHERE forty-seven hardwoods grow:

Request:—"Will you kindly furnish me with general information as to lumbering conditions in southeastern Mexico and give me the names of some of the companies (lumber) operating there?

Will you also advise as to opportunities to trade for one with limited capital?"—T. P. C., McCloud, Calif.

Reply, by Mr. Sheets:—Regarding lumber possibilities of Southeastern Mexico, take your map: The state of Yucatan does not have any lumber worth getting out. The Federal Territory of Quintana Roo from the Caribbean coast to a north and south line about one hundred and fifty miles inland and this line bending southeast across the northern part of the state of Campeche and thereby including with the portion of Quintana Roo already mentioned, the balance of the state of Campeche to the south of the line and extending east into the Province of Peten (Guatemala) and west into the state of Tabasco marks a belt of as fine timber and possibilities as I have ever traversed.

There are forty-seven kinds of hardwoods grow in this belt. (I have an inlaid cane of them.) Mahogany, cedar and zapote are the most common, mahogany being considered a soft wood and little prized. I could mention a half dozen woods growing up to two and three feet in diameter that would make our locust, ash, hickory, oak, walnut, etc., blush in any kind of comparison.

The native Indians are fine woodmen and work by contract usually, averaging several dollars a day and no expense allowance.

Far to the south there are rivers, but for the most part, light rails or tractors would have to be used.

It is not difficult to obtain concessions from the Mexican Government to exploit a federal tract of say 50,000 acres to a 100,000 acres.

Since the end of the régime of President Diaz, nothing has been done to further the foreign interests then interested—in fact nearly all of them have been more or less abandoned because of the political unrest. A new epoch has commenced under President Calles, which is predicted to parallel that of President Diaz for foreign enterprize.

Practically all of the Gulf Coast territory is already owned, leased or conceded by foreign interests—principally chewing-gum interests. The Laguna Corporation, with headquarters at Carmen, Campeche and with Mr. Schumacker as manager, was the only outfit I know of to take out timber last season (cedar). Mr. Leslie Moore is the manager of The Campeche Timber and Fruit Company and the Hearst properties, and his address is also Carmen, Campeche.

The Tropical Products Co., 547 Drexel Buiilding, Philadelphia, Pa., care of R. P. Reilly, vice-president, own an enormous tract of good timber land and are looking for some one to work parts of it on any scale they can handle.

Mr. William Davis, Campeche, is the owner of a large ranch of excellent timber, tractors, labor and all manner of facilities and with years of tropical lumbering experience, that was looking for an American lumberman with some capital, last winter.

I trust this letter will give you the general idea of the situation you ask for. A volume would not cover half the subject. Fortunes have been made and fortunes have been lost in lumber there in just a few years. Where sidewalks and wharves are made of mahogany, just three days shipping from N. O. or Tampa, surely there is opportunity for one who knows that kind of work. Davis would be an excellent man for you to communicate with on all phases of work. Just mention my name to Mr. Davis as having sent you to him and you will need no further introduction.

When you get something for nothing, don't make the other fellow pay the postage on it.

Roaming Radio

A LOUD-SPEAKING outfit that will be suitable for a fastidious burro.

Request:—"Will you please be so good and give me a little of your valuable time? I intend making a trip on one of the Western States this summer with nothing but a burro and what we can carry between us. Fully realizing the blessing, yes almost the necessity of having access to some broadcasting. Would you please help me with a hook-up for a portable set that will receive up to about a thousand miles on the loudspeaker (built in)? Naturally on a trip like this, bulk and weight are things to be considered; a storage battery is of course also out of question, which necessitates using the small tubes. Also, if possible, the aerial should be built in.

Any information, hook-ups, etc., you will favor me with will be highly appreciated by ——, N. Y. C.

Reply, by Mr. McNicol:—Some order that one-thousand-mile range, loudspeaker built in, and light enough to pack along with other necessities on the limited spread of a burro's back.

I have seen many attempts to make a small, compact portable set, but the one that most nearly meets your needs is one of the standard 3-tube outfits, such as the Crosley TRIRDYN, using dry cells, but without loudspeaker. I think you will find the head fones will serve O.K. If you must have a loudspeaker, have a separate unit, such as one of the disk type. They occupy less room than when built in. As to antenna. I would prefer a collapsible loop, they have much greater range than the built-in type antennas. Would also take along one-hundred-foot length of insulated, flexible electric light cord for use as an antenna where you can throw one end of it up a tree.

A small 3-tube set would have range enough and you can make a tight-fitting water-proof cover for it. Being in a stout box the set stands up under hard usage much better than those made in a suit-case.

Wish I were going with you on that trip.

If you don't want an answer enough to enclose full return postage to carry it, you don't want it.

Rhodesia

WHERE mysterious ruins puzzle the scientist.

Request:—"As a reader of *Adventure* I am writing you for a little information concerning Rhodesia. First can you tell me the nature of the country, whether it is bush or veld, especially around the Salisbury district?

What is the average temperature of the country?

What is the population of the country? White and native? Is it true that there are ruins of a former great race scattered about similar to the Aztecs of South America?

What is the principal industry of the country?

Can you also tell me of any book concerning the history of the country's efforts in the Great War?

What also is the size of the country and the distance from Buluwayo and Salisbury to Cape Town?

I enclose envelope and reply coupon for answer. Thanking you."—Leslie Chapman, Durham, Eng.

Reply, by Mr. Beadle:—The general character of Rhodesia southern is open bush with many scattered koppjes; in Matabililand there is more open rolling plains. Around Salisbury it is open bush with many of these small rocky hills.

Average temperature is about 75.

Population white was about 16,000, and black about 800,000 before the war.

There are ruins scattered all over upper southern which at one time were supposed to be ancient Phœnician, but this theory has been adandoned, and they are put down to the blacks of a former race before the whites or Matabili came into the country. They are no way as advanced as the Aztec's ruins.

Principal industry gold mining; also now farming and planting and cattle raising.

Don't know of any book of the war and Rhodesia.

Size about 150,000 square miles. About three hundred from Salisbury to Buluwayo; the latter 1,362 from Cape Town.

"Ask Adventure" service costs you nothing whatever but reply postage and self-addressed envelop.

New Jersey to Arizona

HOW to get there in a Ford truck:

Request:—A friend and I expect to make a trip from here, Pine Beach, N. J., to Tucson, Ariz., in September of this year. My friend has a brother there. We intend to use a Ford truck (high speed) as we can arrange to sleep in same and do away with a tent. There are a few questions I would like to ask you, so here goes:

1. What route would you suggest as best and shortest from here?
2. As we expect to do some gunning after arriving, would we run into trouble by taking our guns with us *en route?*
3. Would we need to carry a barrel for water? Or extra oil, gas?
4. What would you suggest in the way of equipment (camp and clothing)?
5. About how long to make the trip, one way? We expect to average about twenty-five miles per hour, and drive, say, ten hours per day.

Enough for the proposed trip. Now for a question or two on my own, if you care to answer.

I am in the poultry-farming industry here in Pine Beach, N. J., but like everywhere else in the East, Pine Beach will soon be so thickly populated that a fellow can't breathe. And to be among a crowd of people always gives me the feeling that I am caged, like a coyote I saw once in a zoo. You know how I mean; cities and crowds make me feel uneasy, as though I were being detained against my will. Something like that anyhow. Well, here's the questions:

1. Have New Mexico or Arizona any opportunities to offer a young chap (twenty-seven) in the way of land, lonesomeness and profit?
2. Hard work means nothing where there is something to be gained with me; do you think I could make good?
3. And last, but not least, is the gunning good? Here we have rabbits, fox, deer (five days in December), geese and ducks. Sounds good, but there are about forty or fifty gunners to the square mile all season, so you see how much chance one has. There, Mr. Harriman, if you'll let me hear from you I'll take it well. Here's hoping I see Arizona!"—Charles L. Barney, Pine Beach, N. J.

Reply, by Mr. Harriman:—I think your shortest route would be through Pittsburgh on to Columbus, Ohio, to Indianapolis, to St. Louis, to Tulsa by way of Joplin, thence to Oklahoma City, then to Fort Worth and from there to El Paso, then to Deming, New Mexico, and through Lordsburg, Wilcox, Benson to Tucson.

Understand, I have never driven a car from New Jersey to Tucson, but I have the Geographic Magazine map, showing highways, and this seems the logical route. I know it is the correct one after leaving St. Louis and am quite positive it is correct east of there.

You will not get in trouble by having guns along if you keep them where they belong and make no unnecessary display. Do not try to hunt on the way unless you buy a license or you may land in jail.

After getting into New Mexico or even in Texas, you can shoot such things as snakes and coyotes and not get into trouble, but all states object to having outsiders hunt their game without paying for it.

I favor carrying some extra oil and gas, though service stations are found all along the highways. I have traveled in a Ford when we took two five-gallon milk cans full of water along with us. A wise thing to do, as one may have to make a dry camp occasionally and a Ford is a heavy drinker generally. A barrel is not needed, as ten gallons of water will tide you over almost any emergency.

I WOULD buy meals quite often along the way, since one saves time that way, but if you want to cook your own grub gipsy fashion, carry a gasoline camp-cooker. Then you will not have sooty utensils, will not be arrested for leaving live embers, will cook better food and quicker. Carry a frying-pan, two saucepans with handles, a pan for mixing biscuits and one for washing dishes, a small coffee-pot, enameled metal plates, cups and bowls, knives, forks, two mixing spoons of aluminum, three tablespoons, four teaspoons, salt shakers, pepper shakers, three pound can good shortening, slab bacon, flour, sugar, salt, rice, raisins, baking powder, dried fruit of three or four kinds, canned beans, canned soup, three-pound tin box of crackers. Have a small oven fitted to camp-cooker.

I like to take along spaghetti, but I don't know how good you are at cooking. I buy a pound of ground beef in some town, use my double-boiler to cook a mess of rice and boil the beef in a small pan, thicken the water with flour to a gravy consistency, then mix the two and gorge. Or I cook spaghetti, place cooked meat in its gravy in the saucepan, mix canned tomato with the spaghetti and fill up pan with it, then bake the whole until the top is well browned. Gosh! A feast!

Beds—pad, all-wool blankets, any old thing for pillows.

I do not know the exact mileage between Pine Beach and Tucson, but think it is about two thousand five hundred miles. I advise you to be content with one-hundred-and-fifty-mile jumps. Trying to make two hundred and fifty miles per day on a long trip is too much.

YOU will be far less apt to have accidents, breakages and troubles of all kinds, with shorter runs. A friend of mine who has driven from New York to Los Angeles twice and back once, says his third trip went beautifully because he set his limit at one hundred and fifty miles a day and bought the grub ready cooked along the way. It took a round trip to teach him.

Opportunities for young men in New Mexico and Arizona are limited, since stock raising and mining are its chief industries. A little, very little farming, a little logging and a little prospecting for oil make up the rest of its industries. No free land worth having.

Good hunting in the Mogollon and White Mountains, not elsewhere.

Names and addresses of department editors and the exact field covered by each section are given in the next issue of the magazine. Do NOT *write to the magazine itself.*

Old Songs That Men Have Sung

Devoted to outdoor songs, preferably hitherto unprinted—songs of the sea, the lumber-camps, Great Lakes, the West, old canal days, the negro, mountains, the pioneers, etc. Send in what you have or find, so that all may share in them.

Although conducted primarily for the collection and preservation of old songs, the editor will give information about modern ones when he can do so and *IF* all requests are accompanied with self-addressed envelop and reply postage (*NOT* attached). Write to Mr. Gordon direct, *NOT* to the magazine.

Conducted by R. W. GORDON, 4 Conant Hall, Cambridge, Mass.

The Mutiny on the *Saladin*

As related by George Jones, one of the mutineers.
(Text by H. E. Greenough.)

Good people all, come listen to
My melancholy tale,
My dying declaration
Which I have penned in jail.
My present situation
May to all a warning be,
And a caution to all seamen
To beware of mutiny.

George Jones it is my name,
I am from the County Clare;
I left my aged parents
Who then were living there.
I being inclined for roving,
At home I would not stay,
And much against my parents' will
I shipped and went away.

My last ship was the *Saladin*,
I shudder at the name,
I joined her in Valparaiso
All on the Spanish Main.
I shipped as cabin steward,
Which was a fatal day,
For then a demon came on board
Who led four of us astray.

I agreed to work my passage,
The ship being homeward bound
With copper ore and silver,
Over a thousand pounds.
There were two cabin passengers
On board of us did come,
The one was Captain Fielding
The other was his son.

He did upbraid our captain
Ere we were long at sea,
And one by one seduced us
Into a mutiny.
The tempting prize did attract his eyes,
He kept it well in view,
And by his consummated art
Destroyed us all but two.

It was on the fourteenth day of April,
I am sorry to relate,
We began the dreadful enterprise—
At first we killed the mate;
We next killed the carpenter
And overboard him threw;
Our captain next we put to death
With three more of the crew.

The watch were in their hammocks
When the work of death began;
We called the watch and as they came up
We killed them one by one.
These four unhappy victims
Lay in their berths asleep;
We called them up and murdered them
And threw them in the deep.

There were still two remaining
Below and unprepared;
The hand of God protected them
And both their lives were spared.
By them we are brought to justice
And both of them are free;
They had no hand in Fielding's plan
Nor his conspiracy.

An oath was next administered
To the remainder of the crew,
And like a band of brothers
We were all sworn to be true.
It was a Sunday morning
After the bloody deed was done,
When Fielding brought the Bible
And swore us one by one.

All firearms and weapons
We threw into the sea;
He said we could steer for Newfoundland—
To which we did agree—
And secrete all our treasure
In some secluded place.
If it had not been for his treachery
It might have been the case.

We found with Captain Fielding—
For which he lost his life—
A brace of loaded pistols,
Likewise a carving knife.
We suspected him of treachery,
Which did enrage the crew,
He was seized by Carr and Galloway
And overboard was threw.

His son next pled for mercy
As being left alone,
But his entreaties were soon cut off—
No mercy there was shown.
We served him like his father
Who met a watery grave,
So we buried son and father
Beneath the briny wave.

And then it was agreed upon
Before the wind to keep;
We had the world before us
All on the trackless deep.

We mostly kept before the wind
  As we could do no more,
And on the twenty-eighth of May
  We were shipwrecked on the shore.

We all were apprehended,
  And into prison cast,
Tried and found guilty,
  And sentence on us passed.
Four of us are now condemned
  And sentenced for to die,
And the day of execution
  Is the thirtieth of July.

Come all you pious Christians,
  Whom God has pleased to spare,
I hope you will remember us
  Now in your pious prayer.
Make amends to God for us
  For our departing souls!
I hope that you will remember us
  When we decay and mould.

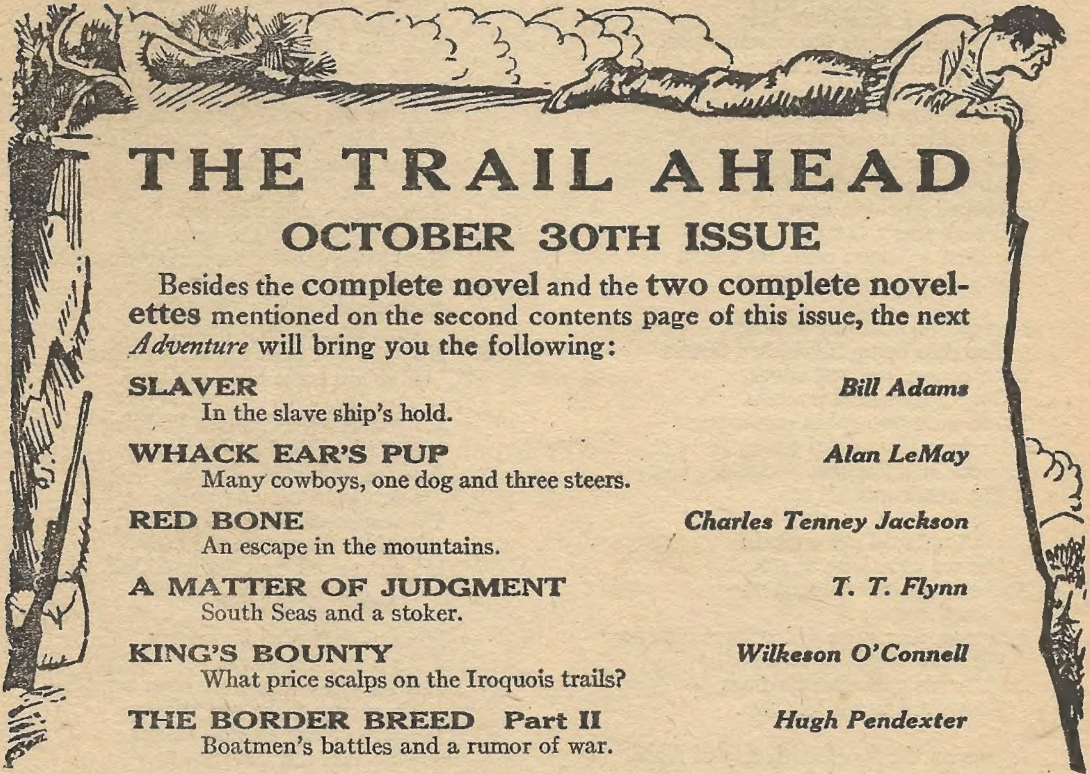
Likewise those pious clergymen
  Who for our souls did pray,
Who watched and prayed along with us
  While we in prison lay—
May God reward them for their pains!
  They really did their best;
They offered holy sacrifice
  To God to grant us rest.

Oh, may that God of mercy
  Who shed his blood so free
Who died upon the shameful cross
  All sinners to set free—
We humbly ask his pardon
  For the gross offence we gave.
Oh Lord, have mercy on our souls
  When we descend the grave.

They were led from the prison
  Unto the gallows high,
And placed upon the fatal stand
  Whereon they were to die.
Farewell, you loving countrymen,
  To this world I bid adieu.
I hope this will a warning be
  To one and all of you.

They were placed on the fatal drop
  With their coffins beneath their feet,
Their clergy were preparing them
  Their maker for to meet.
They prayed sincerely to their God
  And humbly smote their breasts,
Then were launched into eternity
  And may God grant them rest!

SEND all contributions of old songs and all questions concerning them to R. W. Gordon, Care of *Adventure*, Spring and Macdougal Streets, New York City.



THE TRAIL AHEAD

OCTOBER 30TH ISSUE

Besides the **complete novel** and the **two complete novelettes** mentioned on the second contents page of this issue, the next *Adventure* will bring you the following:

SLAVER — ***Bill Adams***
In the slave ship's hold.

WHACK EAR'S PUP — ***Alan LeMay***
Many cowboys, one dog and three steers.

RED BONE — ***Charles Tenney Jackson***
An escape in the mountains.

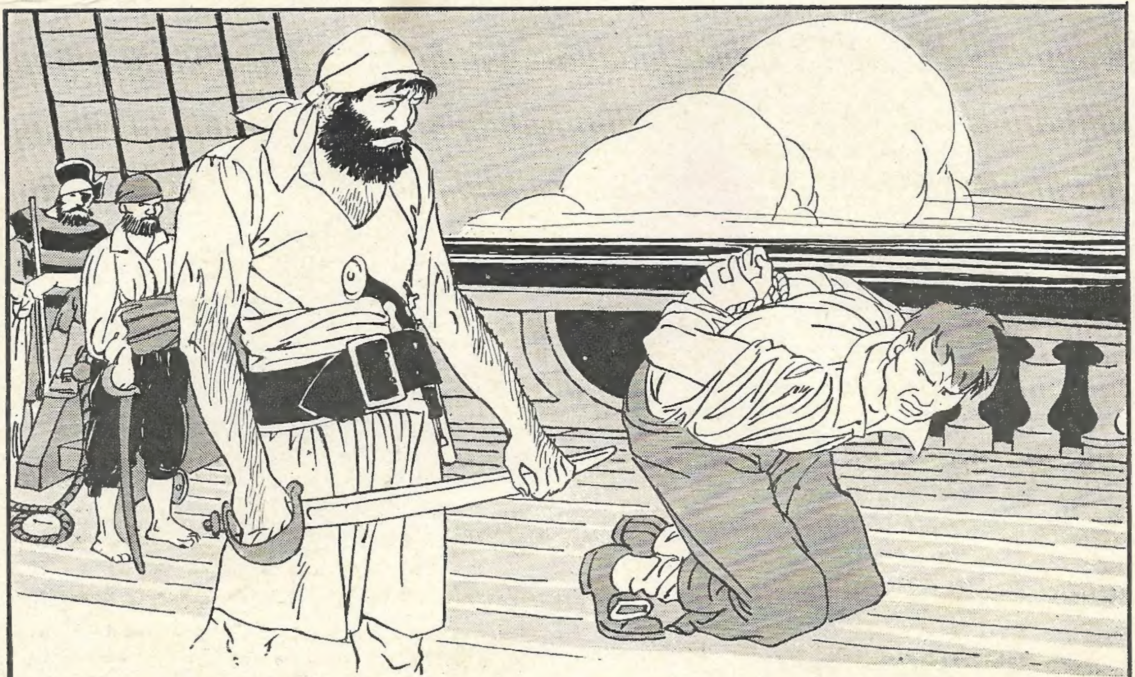
A MATTER OF JUDGMENT — ***T. T. Flynn***
South Seas and a stoker.

KING'S BOUNTY — ***Wilkeson O'Connell***
What price scalps on the Iroquois trails?

THE BORDER BREED Part II — ***Hugh Pendexter***
Boatmen's battles and a rumor of war.

STILL FARTHER AHEAD

THE THREE ISSUES following the next will contain *long* stories by Harold Lamb, W. C. Tuttle, Leslie McFarlane, Elmer Brown Mason, William P. Barron, Georges Surdez, T. S. Stribling, George E. Holt, and Sidney Herschel Small; and short stories by Larry Barretto, S. B. H. Hurst, John Webb, Ralph R. Perry, John McClure, Barry Scobee, L. Paul, Captain Dingle, E. S. Pladwell, Charles Victor Fischer and others; stories of daring men in dangerous places up and down the earth.



Why Did Pirates Wear Whiskers?

In days of old the Pirate bold feared the razor far more than the cutlass. The swashbuckling ferocity that so successfully terrorized his enemies had disastrous results when applied to his own face.

Shaving—even in a hurry—has become much safer since Lysol Shaving Cream appeared. Safer, easier and much more pleasant. Lysol Shaving Cream gives quantities of clean billowy lather. It quickly softens the toughest beard. It contains just the right amount of the famous antiseptic Lysol to make it soothing and healing. It protects the skin when torn or cut by the razor and guards against infection.

Lysol Shaving Cream is antiseptic without the slightest irritating effect on the skin or any unpleasant odor. It is the ideal shaving cream for health, convenience and comfort.

Full Size Tube Free

Fill in your name and address on the coupon below, mail it to us and we will send you without charge, a full-size 50-cent tube—enough for 60 days' shaving. We make this unusual offer because we know that once you have used Lysol Shaving Cream, you will never want to be without it again.

Lysol
Shaving Cream
For a soothing Antiseptic Shave

Manufactured only by LYSOL, INC., 635 Greenwich Street, New York City. Sole Distributors: LEHN & FINK, INC., New York.

Lysol

Shaving Cream

(PRINT NAME AND ADDRESS PLAINLY IN INK)

Dept. SC

On taste alone, Chesterfield has won the endorsement of men in every walk of life

SUCH · POPULARITY · MUST · BE · DESERVED

Liggett & Myers Tobacco Co.